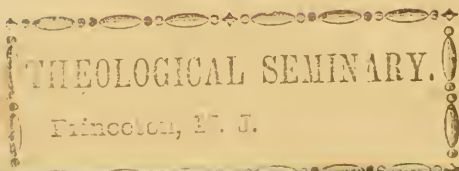




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Views of Christian truth,  
piety, and morality

Theological Society





VIEWS  
OF  
CHRISTIAN TRUTH, PIETY,  
AND  
MORALITY,  
SELECTED FROM THE WRITINGS OF  
DR. PRIESTLEY.

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WITH  
A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE,  
BY HENRY WARE, JR.

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## P R E F A C E.

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IT is many years ago that the idea of the present publication occurred to me. In looking at some of the works of this voluminous writer, I perceived that there were many passages, now unknown, which, if collected together, would form a valuable volume of religious instruction, acceptable to devout readers and honorable to the memory of the distinguished author. Various circumstances delayed the execution of the design, and I had finally committed it to the charge of a friend who proposed to do it at his leisure. Meantime some recent abusive notices of Priestley recalled my attention to the subject, and seemed to present a fitting occasion for a work which would at once instruct and animate religious readers, and do something toward vindicating the character of an injured man; a man, who, with all his errors, and they seem to me to have been many, was yet distinguished for a pure and unalienable devotion to the cause of Christianity, a strong piety, an incorruptible love of truth, and an integrity and simplicity truly apostolic. Little as I can sympathise with many of his favorite views, I can still less sympathise with the injustice which consigns so much excellence to calumny and disgrace.

I am not insensible to the hazard which he runs who attempts to shield a name which has been abandoned to theological reproach. He is quite as likely to draw the obloquy on himself as to remove it from the

former victim. But, notwithstanding, it seems to me that true goodness ought to be honored wherever found, and that he who honors ought to be ready to vindicate it at whatever hazard. They who can admire Fenelon with all his Catholic errors, ought not to be ashamed of their admiration for Priestley with all his Protestant errors. It is not the *error*, in either case, which is admired ; it is the virtue which is seen to exist in the midst of and in spite of the error. If my love of Fenelon does not cause me to be identified with his Romanism, neither ought my respect for Priestley to make me responsible for his obnoxious peculiarities. And while the beautiful writings of the Catholic Archbishop are familiarly read among us in spite of his adherence to the Pope, let the simple pages of the English Divine, less beautiful indeed but not less true and wholesome, find an entrance equally unprejudiced to our tables and our hearts. It is but the demand of common justice. I cannot believe that the Christian world will be deterred for ever from giving heed to it.

With these few words of explanation, I commend this humble effort to the candor of the Christian public, and the blessing of Almighty God.

H. W. JR.

*Cambridge, April 26, 1834.*

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## MEMOIR OF DR. PRIESTLEY.

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DR. PRIESTLEY was born at Fieldhead, near Leeds in Yorkshire, on the 13th of March, old style, 1733. He received impressions of religion and truth from the instructions of his mother, who died when he was seven years old. She was a sincerely religious woman, who carefully taught him the Assembly's Catechism, and was so anxious to impress on him ideas of right, that she once made him carry back to his uncle's house a pin which he had picked up when playing there with his cousins. Two years after her death, he was adopted by an aunt, Mrs. Keighly, with whom he afterwards lived as her own child, and of whom he always spoke in the most grateful terms, saying that she was truly a parent to him. She was, as his parents had been, a devoted Calvinist, though not of the most exclusive character; she maintained constant intercourse and friendship with several of the most heretical ministers in the vicinity. Thus he was brought up, as he tells us,\* "with sentiments of piety, but without bigotry; and having, from his earliest years, given much attention to the subject of religion, he was as much confirmed as he well could be in the principles of Calvinism, all the books that came in his way having that tendency." His brother records of him, "At four years of age he could repeat the Assembly's Catechism without missing a word. When about six and a half, he would now and then ask me to kneel down with him while he prayed."

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\* Memoirs of his own Life, p. 7. (London, 1809).

He had an early love for learning, and made rapid progress in his studies, allowing himself very little time for recreation. Between the ages of eleven and thirteen, he read most of the works of Bunyan, as well as other writers on religion, besides the common Latin authors, and at an early age learned Hebrew, Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic. The disposition of his mind was wholly toward divinity, and all the circumstances of his situation favored the growth of a religious character, and a disposition to religious inquiry. Before going from home to pursue his studies, he was desirous of becoming a communicant. But the elders of the church refused him, because he could not agree that "all the human race (supposing them not to have any sin of their own), were liable to the wrath of God and the pains of hell forever, on account of the sin of Adam only." Some time before this, as he relates, he had been much distressed that he could not feel a proper repentance for the sin of Adam. But he had now learned to think differently on the subject, and pursuing his inquiries became a decided Arminian.

It was the earnest desire of his aunt and other friends, that he would place himself in the Academy at Mile-end, under the care of Dr. Conder. But this he resolutely opposed; because he would there not only be required to relate his *experience*, but "to subscribe his assent to ten printed articles of the strictest Calvinistic faith, and repeat it every six months." The consequence was that he nearly lost his education; but it was at length decided that he should go to Daventry. This was in September, 1752. The three years which he spent at that institution, he always looked back upon with great satisfaction. The method of theological instruction was very free, variety of sentiment existed upon many important questions both among teachers and pupils, liberty of opinion and discussion was fully allowed, and every inquirer arrived at his results after an opportunity for a thorough and unbiassed investigation. The result in the case of young Priestley was, that he still further modified the



opinions both religious and philosophical of his early education, and he left the institution an Arian and a Necessarian. His diligence in study may be inferred from the fact, that, besides his stated duties, he read in company with a fellow-student, ten folio pages of Greek every day, besides a Greek play every week, and composed the first copy of his "Institutes of Religion."

On leaving the Academy he took charge of a small congregation at Needham. But an impediment in his speech rendered him unpopular in the pulpit, and his heretical opinions caused him to be shunned when he attempted to open a school; and at the end of three years he removed to Nantwich, in Cheshire, where the congregation was still smaller than in Needham, consisting of only about sixty persons. Here he remained three years, teaching a school of about thirty-six pupils from seven in the morning till four in the afternoon, and then giving instruction in a private family till seven in the evening. He appears to have obtained no small reputation as a teacher, and in September, 1761, he was removed to the office of Tutor in the languages at the Academy in Warrington.

Here he married in 1762, and lived happily for six years. As a teacher he was indefatigably laborious, not confining himself to his own department, that of the languages; but lecturing also on oratory, history, civil law, and anatomy. His lectures on oratory and on history were afterwards published. It was during this period, that, in one of his annual visits to London, he became acquainted with Dr. Franklin, and was induced to compose the "History of Electricity," and to interest himself more than he had ever yet done in philosophical experiments. It is one among a multitude of proofs of his versatility and power of despatch, that he composed and printed this large and valuable work in less than twelve months, though engaged five hours daily in lecturing in the Academy.

In 1767 Dr. Priestley accepted an invitation to take the

pastoral charge of Mill-hill Chapel at Leeds, whither he removed in September, and where he remained for six years. Here he was as indefatigable a minister as he had been a tutor at Warrington. "I continued six years," he says, "very happy with a liberal, harmonious, and friendly congregation, to whom my services, of which I was not sparing, were very acceptable. Here I had no unreasonable prejudices to contend with, so that I had full scope for every kind of exertion; and I can truly say that I always considered the office of a Christian minister the most honorable of any on earth, and in the studies proper to it I always took the greatest pleasure." These studies he had never remitted in the midst of his previous occupations; but he now devoted himself to them with more exclusive attention, and pursued them widely. From this time his publications became more frequent, and on a great variety of subjects. Now it was that he planned and commenced the publication of his "Theological Repository." And as if all this variety of labor was nothing, he here entered on that course of patient and ingenious experiments in Natural Philosophy which were attended with so brilliant success, and have given him a high place among the great discoverers and philosophers of modern times. His first publication on the subject was a small pamphlet in 1772. The next year he communicated an account of his experiments to the Royal Society, and received the honor of the gold medal. He mentions in his *Memoirs* the pleasant circumstance, that the person in Leeds who alone gave him any aid in his experiments was a zealous methodist, Mr. Hey, who had written against him on some theological questions.

At this time it was proposed to him as a man of science that he should accompany the second expedition of Captain Cook to the South Seas, and he began to make arrangements for the voyage; but some clergymen in the Board of Longitude objected on account of his religious principles, and Dr. Forster received the appointment;—"a person," says

Priestley with a characteristic candor, "far better qualified for the purpose."

In May, 1773, Dr. Priestley resigned his charge at Leeds. His labors had been various and successful, and evidently conducted on the principle which he lays down in these words : "The greatest ambition of Christian ministers should be to render their respective churches examples to others in regularity of discipline, and in the most effectual modes of instruction adapted to every age, and especially to persons in younger life." In order to effect this end, he had instituted in his own congregation a series of measures, of which his sermon gives a brief account, and which we quote as furnishing a good idea of the manner in which he executed his important functions.

"Perceiving, upon my first coming among you, that very few, in proportion to the number of the congregation, received the Lord's Supper, I published "A Free Address" to you upon the subject, calculated, as I thought, to explain the nature of that institution, to answer the objections you might have to the celebration of it, especially those which remained from the ignorance and superstition of the dark ages of Christianity, and to set the advantage and obligation of communicating in a clear and strong light. I have had the satisfaction to find that my endeavours, in this respect, have not been wholly without effect, though by no means so great as I wished, or indeed expected."

\* \* \*

"Being sensible how much is incumbent upon masters of families, and how much is in their power, with respect to the care of their children and servants, in instructing them, attending to their morals, and keeping up the worship of God in their families, I published a plain and earnest Address to you on this subject also, together with short "Forms of Prayer," for all the usual occasions of a family ; and I took what care I could to have it put into the hands of every mas-

ter of a family among you. Whether this attempt has had any good effect, is known to God and your own consciences."

\* \* \*

"The great profligacy of the present age being manifestly owing to a want of moral and religious principles, imbibed in early years, and it being impossible to inculcate these principles with sufficient force and effect by discourses from the pulpit, which are almost necessarily miscellaneous and unconnected, I formed, and have carried into execution, a pretty extensive plan of Religious Instruction, advancing, in a regular progress, from infancy to years of perfect manhood.

For this purpose I thought it convenient to divide the younger part of my hearers into three classes. The first consisted of children, for whose use I printed a short and very plain Catechism, containing such a view of the principles of religion as, I think, the youngest children that have attained to the use of speech, may be made to understand. The second consisted of young persons more advanced in years, for whom I drew up another Catechism, consisting of a set of questions only, peculiarly calculated, as I think, to bring them very early, and pretty thoroughly acquainted with the Scriptures, the genuine source of all religious knowledge.

The third class consisted of young men, from the age of sixteen or eighteen, to about thirty, for whose use I composed a set of Lectures, which I delivered in the way of conversation, in which I endeavoured to demonstrate to them, in a regular manner, the principles of natural religion, the evidences, and the doctrines of revelation, and which I concluded with a view of the corruptions of Christianity, historically deduced. By this means, I am satisfied, from the trial that I have now made of it, that young persons may most easily be brought to understand their religion as Christians, Protestants, and Dissenters.

The peculiar advantages of this mode of instruction, and

a more distinct account of the nature of it, I explained in an "Essay on the best Method of communicating Religious Knowledge to the Members of Christian Societies." Part of this Course of Lectures I have already published, under the title of "Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion," and I intend, God willing, to publish the remainder in due time.

In part, to avoid obvious inconveniences, and partly for want of a room sufficiently large for the purpose, I confined these lectures, for the first time of reading them, to young men; but I should have been glad if, at the second time of reading them, I could have contrived to instruct the young women, either at the same time or separately.

It is with great satisfaction that I can say, with respect to most of the young men of this congregation, that they have given due attendance on these lectures; and I flatter myself that, by the attention which they gave to them when they were delivered, and which, I hope, they will still continue to give to them when they are printed, they will find their time and pains not ill bestowed.

With respect to children of the first class, I must own that I had not all the encouragement that I wished, and still less with respect to the second; owing, perhaps, to the parents not sufficiently entering into the nature of a thing so new to them as this was; for I am unwilling to suppose that they were averse to taking the pains, which they must, at least at the first, have necessarily done, to prepare their children for this kind of exercise.

It is acknowledged by all, that the general plan and discipline of our societies has deviated very far indeed from that of the primitive churches, which consisted of persons whose object it was to watch over and edify one another, and especially that a very unequal part of the burden is now thrown upon the minister; since he is generally so situated, that he cannot, with the least probability of success, interpose his advice or admonition where it may be most wanted. I therefore wrote and published an Address



to you, and other Christian societies, upon that subject, proposing what appeared to me a better constitution of a Christian church, by means of which the original and proper ends of Christian societies might be more effectually answered.

I am afraid we are gone too far from the primitive institutions of Christianity to expect a revival of them in this age; but I hope that the idea I then endeavoured to give you of the obligation that naturally lies upon every member of a Christian society, who, on any account whatever, has influence in it (without any formal nomination to an office) to contribute all that may be in his power to the real benefit of it, by instruction, reproof, or any other way, will not be wholly without effect; and that you will, in general, be more attentive to the important Christian duty of ‘provoking to love and to good works, exhorting one another daily while it is called to-day, lest any be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.’

Lastly, perceiving in this neighbourhood, and, in some measure, among yourselves, the progress of what appears to me to be a spurious and mischievous set of notions in religion, inspiring very unworthy ideas of the Divine Being and the maxims of his government, which cannot but have an unfavourable effect upon the disposition of men’s minds, and consequently upon their conduct in life; I published, in the cheapest form that I could, and, in order to give as little offence as possible, without my name, a serious “Appeal to the Professors of Christianity,” upon this subject. This, and other small pieces, written in pursuance of the same design, I have had the satisfaction to find, have been the instrument, in the hands of Divine Providence, of enlightening the minds of many in the knowledge of what I believe to be his truth, and I hope they will still continue to produce the same effect.

I was the more willing to publish something of this kind, as it has always been my opinion, and my practice has been

agreeable to it, to keep all subjects of religious controversy, as much as possible, out of the pulpit; and yet it was to be wished, that persons of plain understandings, who were disposed to read and inquire for themselves, might have an opportunity of seeing the foundation, in reason and the Scriptures, of those doctrines which alone can render the Divine Being the object of filial reverence, love, and confidence; and likewise be able to answer those who allege detached passages of Scripture, in favor of long-established corruptions; passages often ill translated, but more often wretchedly interpreted."

For some years after leaving Leeds, Dr. Priestley resided with Lord Shelburne, at his very urgent solicitation, as librarian and literary companion. With him, in 1774, he made a tour to the continent, and spent a month in Paris, where of course he had ready access to the scientific and philosophic circles of that great city. Here he found, as he anticipated, not a little infidelity.

"As I was sufficiently apprized of the fact, I did not wonder, as I otherwise should have done, to find all the philosophical persons to whom I was introduced at Paris, unbelievers in Christianity, and even professed Atheists. As I chose on all occasions to appear as a Christian, I was told by some of them that I was the only person they had ever met with, of whose understanding they had any opinion, who professed to believe Christianity. But on interrogating them on the subject, I soon found that they had given no proper attention to it, and did not really know what Christianity was. This was also the case with a great part of the company that I saw at Lord Shelburne's. But I hope that my always avowing myself to be a Christian, and holding myself ready on all occasions to defend the genuine principles of it, was not without its use. Having conversed so much with unbelievers, at home and abroad, I thought I should be able to combat their prejudices with some advantage, and with this view I wrote, while I was with Lord Shelburne, the first part of my "Let-

ters to a Philosophical Unbeliever," in proof of the doctrines of a God and a Providence; and to this I have added, during my residence at Birmingham, a second part, in defence of the evidences of Christianity. The first part being replied to by a person who called himself Mr. Hammon, I wrote a reply to his piece, which has hitherto remained unanswered. I am happy to find that this work of mine has done some good, and I hope that in due time it will do more. I can truly say, that the greatest satisfaction I receive from the success of my philosophical pursuits, arises from the weight it may give to my attempts to defend Christianity, and to free it from those corruptions which prevent its reception with philosophical and thinking persons, whose influence with the vulgar and the unthinking is very great."

From Paris he wrote to Mr. Lindsey as follows :

" I am quite tired of the idleness in which I spend my time here, and long exceedingly to be about my experiments, or some composition. Upon my journey I have read and studied the Gospels very much, and should like exceedingly to print the Greek text, in the order of a harmony, with my dissertations from the " Repository " prefixed. It would certainly add much to the satisfaction of reading the Life of Christ, to have the whole narrative in one continued story, and the variations in separate columns. I will, at least, cut to pieces, and put together, one copy for my own use. In reading over the gospel of John, I think I perceive that one of his principal objects was to show what opportunities the Jews had for knowing the divine mission of Christ, and consequently how inexcusable they were in their rejection of him; and the supposition of this gospel being written after the destruction of Jerusalem, suggests a reason for his having such an object in view.

The more attention I give to the study of the Scriptures, the more attached I am to it; and I hope the time will come when I shall apply myself to it chiefly. At present I read chiefly with a practical view; and the attentive consideration of the facts in the gospel history has certainly the strongest tendency



to impress the heart and influence the life in the most favorable manner. The more I read the history of the death of Christ, in particular, the more reasons I think I see why he was to suffer ; at least I see the old ones in a stronger light and feel more of their force. Other studies, and other pursuits that to many others are very proper and useful, appear to me to be altogether insignificant compared to these.

I am here in the midst of unbelievers, and even atheists. I had a long conversation with one, an ingenious man, and good writer, who maintained seriously that man might arise, without any Maker, from the earth. They may despise me ; I am sure I despise and pity them."

About the same time he wrote thus to another friend.

"I was more shocked at the superstition of the Catholics than I expected to have been ; but found some of their priests very intelligent and candid, and some of them as truly Christian characters, in all respects, as any sort can boast ; but these, I believe, are few. The generality, I have reason to think, from the inquiries I have made, are either very stupid, or infidels. Their philosophers are almost universally the latter.

"I had a conversation of two hours with a most ingenious man, and a considerable writer, who maintained that man might have sprung out of the earth by spontaneous generation ; and I was told by another, that I was the first believer in Christianity that he had met with of whose understanding he had any opinion. I always told them very freely, that I could easily account for their infidelity by the very corrupted state of their established religion, farther than which they plainly had not looked ; and that they could not pretend to have studied the subject as myself and other believers in England had done. However, I left them all as I had found them ; and whether they think better or worse of me on that account, I am very indifferent. They could not possibly, however, have shown more respect to any body, than they did to me, especially on account of my *Observations on Air*, which

have engaged the attention of almost all the philosophers on the continent.

“ I saw a good deal of several of the present leading statesmen of France. They are, in general, philosophical people, very honest and economical, friends of commerce and of peace. The king is, on all hands, agreed to have nothing at all in him, and while he is in good hands, all will do well. But there are many persons disaffected, intriguing, lovers of war, and violent enemies of England. If these get into power, which is far from being impossible, we shall certainly have a war, and the economy of the present ministers will have brought the nation into excellent order for it.

“ The present French ministry are great friends of toleration. A person who is very much in their confidence told me, he hoped that in ten years all religions would have a full toleration in France ; but that, I am convinced, will be pushing things too fast for that country. At present they are miserably hampered by the *censeurs* of the press. The person who has translated my Treatise on Air, could not obtain leave to insert that paragraph in the preface in which I speak of the consequence of the spread of knowledge with respect to religion. A person is translating my Essay on Government ; but he must print it in Holland, and get it into France clandestinely.

“ Upon the whole, I thought the country by no means a desirable one to live in, or to stay much in, and I wonder much at the taste of my countrymen, who spend so much of their time, and of their money, there.”

Dr. Priestley, in several of his works, recurs to the impressions which he received during this visit to Paris ; and there can be no doubt that this was one of the circumstances which instigated him to that perpetual warfare against infidelity, and that earnest, never-ceasing defence of Christianity, by which his career was distinguished.

On his return from Paris, he took up his abode at Calne, Wiltshire, in the neighbourhood of which place was the resi-

dence of Lord Shelburne. Here he spent the summer seasons of the year, and in winter accompanied his lordship to London. This mode of life continued for about six years; during which time he continued his philosophical experiments and theological inquiries, and published frequently on various subjects. While at Leeds he had become satisfied that the Arian doctrine was untenable and had adopted the Humanitarian; he now engaged in studies relative to the nature of man, and came to the persuasion that "man is wholly material, and that the only prospect of immortality is from the Christian doctrine of a Resurrection." The publication of these opinions increased the odium with which he was regarded, and he was represented as an unbeliever in revelation, and no better than an atheist. The question of materialism was made the subject of an amicable controversy between himself and his friend Dr. Price, "and remains a proof of the possibility of discussing subjects mutually considered as of the greatest importance, with the most perfect good temper and without the least diminution of friendship." About this time, also, he carried on a discussion in an equally friendly tone with Dr. Newcome, afterwards archbishop, on the duration of our Saviour's ministry.

On relinquishing his situation with Lord Shelburne, in 1780 (who settled on him an annuity for life of one hundred and fifty pounds), Dr. Priestley took up his abode at Birmingham. He selected this place because of the facility it afforded him in his philosophical inquiries by furnishing the best workmen of every kind, and because of the distinguished chemists whose society he could there enjoy. There, too, he found a select and valuable religious circle, with whom he met statedly once a fortnight, and with whose aid he recommenced the publication of the "Theological Repository." But he could not long continue a private man. He soon received an urgent invitation to become minister of the New Meeting, as colleague with Mr. Blythe; an invitation which he accepted, with the understanding that Mr. Blythe should

perform the duties of the pastoral care, while he himself should be limited to those of the pulpit and the instruction of the young. This last was now, as it had been at Leeds, a favorite object with him, and he gave much time to reduce it to a thorough and effective system. Few men perhaps have been more successful than he in conducting this part of duty, or have received warmer and more lasting expressions of gratitude from those whom he thus benefited. In a letter of Mr. Lindsey, during a visit to Birmingham in 1783, he says — “I was surprised on the Sunday afternoon, in going into the meeting for my hat, to see near thirty young ladies, some of them, I was told, married, seated, to be instructed in the principles of Christianity. This was the third class that had been before him that day; and this is his usual work every Sunday, added to his officiating to the whole congregation one part of it.”

Another measure in which he interested himself for the advantage of the congregation was an attempt to revive some system of church discipline among them. He was strongly persuaded that great injury had resulted to the Dissenters, and to the cause of religion among them, from their negligence in this particular; and had some time before set forth his views in an *Essay on Church Discipline*. He now urged the subject on the attention of his congregation in a sermon, which was published at their request, and the suggestions of which he had the satisfaction of finding readily adopted.

This period of his ministry in Birmingham was marked by the same industrious habits of study which had distinguished the preceding portions of his life. Among the most important of his works were the “*History of the Corruptions of Christianity*,” and the “*History of Early Opinions respecting Jesus Christ* ;” works which gave rise to that celebrated controversy in which Dr. Horsley was particularly notorious. This period was likewise distinguished by numerous publications on the *Evidences of Christianity*, and by an annual pamphlet entitled “*Defences of Unitarianism* ;” hav-

ing for its object to examine and reply to whatever had been written against Unitarianism during the preceding year. So much activity and perseverance on his part tended to excite the severe displeasure of his theological opponents, especially of those who were connected with the established church ; and he was attacked and answered in the most virulent style of party denunciation. Dr. Horsley especially, and two clergymen of Birmingham, Mr. Madan and Mr. Burn\*, gained a sad preëminence by the abusiveness of their manner, and did their full share toward exasperating the public mind, and bringing on the catastrophe which followed.

The state of the times was peculiar, full of causes of convulsion and peril. The French Revolution was breaking out, and the whole English community was agitated by sympathy and alarm. Priestley, with his friends, took side with those who saw every thing to hope from this political movement, and thus made himself obnoxious to the party in power, who saw every thing to fear and abhor. At the same time the Dissenters were strenuously exerting themselves to extort from Parliament an acknowledgment of their rights and a restoration to perfect religious liberty ; and here, too, Priestley made himself obnoxious to those in power, who saw nothing in the acknowledgment of these claims, but the ruin of the church and the overthrow of Christianity. Upon these subjects Priestley published very little ; but that little attracted great attention from the eminence of the man, and was offensive from the plain and unguarded style of remark which

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\* At a public meeting in 1825, Mr. Burn took occasion to recur to his share in these controversies. He said, "that had he to live his past life over again, he should have to correct the asperity of feelings and expressions which it was his misfortune to have used in his controversies with a late respectable and highly talented individual (Dr. P.) Whatever degree of error there might have been in that procedure, he begged to say that it did not arise from any disrespect to that highly respected individual, but from what he then considered to be his duty."



was characteristic of him. Passages were unfairly quoted and commented on in the House of Commons, and pains taken to convince the people everywhere that he, with other Dissenters, was engaged in a plot for the destruction of the church and the establishment of republican government. It consequently became a favorite toast of the day, "Damnation and confusion to the Presbyterians." To fan the flame yet more, falsehoods of the most atrocious character respecting him were published and circulated, and caricature prints were scattered abroad to help persuade the multitude that he was an atheist. One of these was entitled, *Sedition and Atheism defeated*. Silas Deane is represented on his death-bed. A clergyman stands by him, holding up his hands and exclaiming, "No God ! who taught you that doctrine ?" The dying man replies, "Dr. Priestley." A note is annexed to the print, saying, "The particulars of this awful and interesting conversion to atheism may be seen in a pamphlet entitled *Theodosius*, and sold with or without the print." This pamphlet was industriously circulated, and Dr. Priestley was obliged to publish a formal refutation of the unprincipled slander.

In a ballad written and sung against the Dissenters at this time, was the following stanza.

"Sedition is their creed ;  
Feigned sheep, but wolves indeed,  
How can we trust ?  
Gunpowder Priestley would  
Deluge the throne with blood,  
And lay the great and good  
Low in the dust."

"Dr. Priestley," said one of the pamphlets printed at this time, "seems a chaos in miniature, not worth God's notice, has neither belief nor understanding given him. For a careful analysis proves his spirit of the order of rebelling angels, his principles frothy and fiery, like fixed and inflammable air, mixed with gunpowder, his body a *terra damnata*,

and the whole compound a *devil incarnate*." The clergy lent themselves 'eagerly to this work. It was continually sounded from their pulpits in Birmingham and in other places, that he was a declared enemy to revelation and a setter up of reason in its stead ; that he had publicly said, he would never rest till he had pulled down that impostor Jesus Christ ; and a preacher in Bristol even reported from the pulpit, that he had said he would rather be damned than be saved by Jesus Christ. By such means was the public mind poisoned and inflamed. The passions of the vulgar were worked up to the proper pitch. On the walls of the houses, along the streets, were written in large characters, *Madan for ever, damn Priestley, no Presbyterians, damn the Presbyterians ;* and even the boys, leaving their play as he passed by, once followed him shouting *Damn Priestley, damn him, damn him, for ever, for ever, for ever*. It had thus become evident that only a fit occasion was wanting, and the populace would be found prepared for any act of violence that might be desired at their hands. Such an occasion arose.

It was proposed by the friends of the French Revolution in Birmingham to celebrate that great event by a public dinner, on the 14th of July, 1791. This was the occasion seized upon for unchaining the fury of the party mob. It was understood and spoken of in London beforehand. A clergyman at Worcester said "it was brewing," the day before it happened. When the day came, between eighty and ninety gentlemen dined, as they had proposed, at the hotel.

"When the company met," says Dr. Priestley, in his own account, "a crowd was assembled at the door, and some of them hissed, and showed other marks of disapprobation, but no material violence was offered to any body. Mr. Keir, a member of the church of England, took the chair ; and when they had dined, drank the toasts, and sung the songs which had been prepared for the occasion, they dispersed. This was about five o'clock, and the town remained quiet till about eight. It was evident, therefore, that the dinner was not the

proper cause of the riot which followed : but that the mischief had been pre-concerted, and that this particular opportunity was laid hold of for the purpose.

Some days before this meeting, a few copies of a printed hand-bill of an inflammatory nature had been found in a public-house in the town, and of this, great use was made to inflame the minds of the people against the Dissenters, to whom, though without any evidence whatever, it was confidently ascribed. The thing itself did not deserve any notice, and paragraphs of as seditious a nature frequently appear in the public newspapers and other publications, and (as would, no doubt, have been the case with this) are neglected and forgotten. But the magistrates of Birmingham, and other known enemies to the Dissenters, were loud in their exclamations against it, though perhaps fabricated for the use that was made of it ; and a copy was officiously sent to the secretaries of state, who ordered a strict inquiry to be made after the author, printer, or distributor ; and in consequence of this, a reward of a hundred pounds was offered for the discovery of any of them.

In consequence of all this preparation, we were informed that, though the trade of Birmingham had never been more brisk, so that hands could not be found to manufacture the goods that were ordered, many of the public-houses were that day full of people, whose horrid execrations against the Dissenters were heard into the streets ; and it has been asserted, that some of the master manufacturers had shut up their work shop, and thereby left their men at full liberty for any mischief.

It has since appeared, that besides the dinner at the hotel, there were also meetings of the opposite party on this 14th of July ; some of whom had distributed copies of a letter signed by Dr. Tatham. This seemed to increase the animosity of the lower class of people, with whom the common alehouses were filled. Some of these meetings did not rise from their entertainment so early, or with so much sobriety, as those who



dined at the hotel ; and it was at the breaking up of their companies that the riots commenced. Let the impartial, then, judge to which of the dinners the riot that followed is to be ascribed.

Mr. Adam Walker, the ingenious and well-known lecturer in Natural Philosophy, was passing through the town with his wife and family, and dined with me at my own house, for the last time, on that day. Before dinner, I had walked to the town with him, and they left me in the evening. Some time after this, three of my intimate friends, whose houses were situated near the same road, and farther from the town than mine, called upon me to congratulate me, and one another, on the dinner having passed over so well ; and after chatting cheerfully some time on the subject, they left me just as it was beginning to be dark.

After supper, when I was preparing to amuse myself, as I sometimes did, with a game of backgammon, we were alarmed by some young men rapping violently at the door ; and when they were admitted, they appeared to be almost breathless with running. They said that a great mob had assembled at the hotel, where the company had dined ; that after breaking the windows there, they were gone to the New Meeting and were demolishing the pulpit and the pews, and that they threatened me and my house. That they should think of molesting me, I thought so improbable, that I could hardly give any credit to the story. However, imagining that perhaps some of the mob might come to insult me, I was prevailed upon to leave the house, and meant to go to some neighbour's at a greater distance from the town ; but having no apprehension for the house itself, or any thing in it, I only went up stairs, and put some papers and other things of value, where I thought that any persons getting into the house would not easily find them. My wife did the same with some things of hers. I then bade the servants keep the doors fastened ; if any body should come, to say that I was gone, and if any stones should be thrown at the windows, to keep themselves

out of danger, and that I did not doubt but they would go away again.

At this time, which was about half-past nine o'clock, Mr. S. Ryland, a friend of mine, came with a chaise, telling us there was no time to lose, but that we must immediately get into it and drive off. Accordingly, we got in with nothing more than the clothes we happened to have on, and drove from the house. But hearing that the mob consisted only of people on foot, and concluding that when they found I was gone off in a chaise, they could not tell whither, they would never think of pursuing me, we went no farther than Mr. Russell's, a mile on the same road, and there we continued several hours, Mr. Russell himself, and other persons, being upon the road on horseback to get intelligence of what was passing. I also more than once walked about half way back to my own house for the same purpose; and then I saw the fires from the two meeting-houses, which were burning down.

About twelve we were told that some hundreds of the mob were breaking into my house, and that when they had demolished it they would certainly proceed to Mr. Russell's. We were persuaded, therefore, to get into the chaise again, and drive off; but we went no farther than Mr. Thomas Hawkes's, on Moseley-Green, which is not more than half a mile farther from the town, and there we waited all the night.

It being remarkably calm, and clear moonlight, we could see to a considerable distance, and being upon a rising ground, we distinctly heard all that passed at the house, every shout of the mob, and almost every stroke of the instruments they had provided for breaking the doors and the furniture. For they could not get any fire, though one of them was heard to offer two guineas for a lighted candle; my son, whom we left behind us, having taken the precaution to put out all the fires in the house, and others of my friends got all the neighbours to do the same. I afterwards heard that much pains was taken, but without effect, to get fire from my large electrical machine, which stood in the library.

About three o'clock in the morning, the noises ceased ; and Mr. Russell and my son coming to us, said that the mob was almost dispersed, that not more than twenty of them remained, and those so much intoxicated, that they might easily be taken. We, therefore, returned with him, and about four o'clock were going to bed at his house. But when I was undressing myself for that purpose, news came that there was a fresh accession of some hundreds more to the mob, and that they were advancing towards Mr. Russell's. On this we got into the chaise once more, and driving through a part of the town distant from the mob, we went to Dudley, and thence to my son-in-law's, Mr. Finch, at Heath-Forge, five miles farther, where we arrived before breakfast, and brought the first news of our disaster.

Here I thought myself perfectly safe, and imagining that when the mischief was over (and I had no idea of its going beyond my own house), and supposing that, as the people in general would be ashamed and concerned at what had happened, I might return ; thinking also that the area within the walls of the meeting-house might soon be cleared, I intended, if the weather would permit, to preach there the Sunday following, and from this text—" Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

At noon, however, we had an express from Stourbridge, to acquaint us that the mob had traced me to Dudley, and would pursue me to Heath. To this I paid no attention, nor to another from Dudley in the evening to inform us of the same thing ; and being in want of sleep, I went to bed soon after ten. But at eleven I was awaked, and told that a third express was just arrived from Dudley, to assure us that some persons were certainly in pursuit of me, and would be there that night. All the family believing this and urging me to make my escape, I dressed myself, got on horseback, and with a servant rode to Bridgenorth, where I arrived about two in the morning.

After about two hours' sleep in this place, I got into a

chaise, and went to Kidderminster, on my way to London. Here I found myself among my friends, and, as I thought, far enough from the scene of danger, especially as we continually heard news from Birmingham, and that the mischief did not extend beyond the town. Hearing, particularly, that all was quiet at Dudley, I concluded that there could be no real cause of apprehension at Heath; and, being unwilling to go farther than was necessary, I took a horse, and arrived there in the evening.

There, however, I found the family in great consternation at the sight of me; and Mr. Finch just arriving from Dudley, and saying that they were in momentary expectation of a riot there, that the populace were even assembled in the street, and were heard to threaten the meeting-house, the house of the minister, and those of other principal Dissenters, and that all attempts to make them disperse had been in vain,—I mounted my horse again, though much fatigued, and greatly wanting sleep.

My intention was, to get to an inn about six miles on the road to Kidderminster, where I might get a chaise, and in it proceed to that town. No chaise, however, was to be had; so that I was under the necessity of proceeding on horseback, and neither the servant nor myself distinguishing the road in the night, we lost our way, and at break of day found ourselves on Bridgenorth race-ground, having ridden nineteen miles, till we could hardly sit our horses.

Arriving at this place a second time, about three o'clock in the morning, we with some difficulty roused the people at an indifferent inn, and I immediately got into bed, and slept a few hours. After breakfast, we mounted our horses, and I got a second time to Kidderminster. There, finding that if I immediately took a chaise, and drove fast, I might get to Worcester time enough for the mail-coach, I did so; and meeting with a young man of my own congregation, he accompanied me thither; which was a great satisfaction to me, as he acquainted me with many particulars of the riot of which

I was before ignorant. At Worcester I was just time enough for the coach, and fortunately, there was one place vacant. I took it, and, travelling all night, I got to London on Monday morning, July 18.

Here I was in a place of safety, and had leisure for rest and reflection. I can truly say, however, that in all the hurry of my flight, and while the injuries I had received were fresh upon my mind, I had not one desponding or unbenevolent thought. I really pitied the delusion of the poor incendiaries, and the infatuation of those who had deluded them, and never doubted but that, though I could not tell how or when, good would arise from this, as well as from every other evil. The magnanimity of my wife was never shaken; and, as at other times, she then felt more for others than she did for herself. It was a distressing circumstance, that our daughter was expecting to be brought to bed in about a month, so that she was full of alarm, and her mother could not leave her to accompany me. We were, however, as happy as we could be in this state of forced separation; I with my old friends in London, and she either with our daughter, or with one of the most friendly, generous, and worthy families in the world, the neighbourhood of Birmingham."

"In this situation, what I regretted most was the loss, as I then supposed, of all my manuscript papers,\* for which no reparation could be made. — Let any man of letters, ar-

\* They consisted of the following particulars :

I. My "Diaries" from the year 1752, containing the particulars of almost every day; and at the beginning of each of them I had given the state of my mind, of my affairs in general, and of my prospects, for that year; which it was often amusing, and also instructive to me, to look back upon.

II. Several large "Common-place Books," containing the fruits of my reading almost ever since I could read with any degree of judgment.

III. The "Register of my Philosophical Experiments, and Hints for new ones."

IV All my Sermons, Prayers, and Forms for administering the



rived, as I am, to near the age of sixty, consider what must have been my accumulation of curious papers of various kinds, from the variety and extent of my pursuits, (greater, unquestionably, than those of most men now living,) and think what I could not but have felt for their loss, and their dispersion into such hands as they fell into, and who make,

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Lord's Supper, &c., many of which I had, with great expense, got transcribed into a fair long hand.

V. "Notes and a Paraphrase on the whole of the New Testament, excepting the Book of Revelation." The whole of it had been delivered from the pulpit, and in a preface to another work, I had promised to publish it. I was within five days (employing my amanuensis three hours a-day) of having the whole fairly transcribed for the press. I had also "Notes on all the Psalms," which I had delivered from the pulpit.

VI. "A New Translation of the Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes;" having undertaken, in conjunction with several other Unitarians, to make a new translation of both the Old and New Testament.

VII. "A Series of Letters to the Members of the New Jerusalem Church," which was lately opened in Birmingham. These were fairly transcribed, and were to have gone to the press the Monday following; and being on the most friendly terms with the minister and principal members of that church, I had made an appointment to meet them on the preceding Friday, to read the work to them from the manuscript, in order to be satisfied that I had not misstated any of their doctrines, and that I might hear their objections to what I had written. A rough draft of a great part of these "Letters" happened to be preserved, in consequence of taking a copy of them by Messrs. Boulton and Watt's machine, and from this I have lately published them.

VIII. "Memoirs of my own Life, to be published after my death."

IX. A great number of Letters from my friends and learned foreigners, with other papers.

X. A short account of all the persons whose names are introduced into my "Chart of Biography," which I intended to publish, though not very soon.

XI. "Illustrations of Hartley's Doctrine of Association of Ideas, and farther Observations on the Human Mind," the publication of which I had promised in the Preface to my "Essay on Education." This would, perhaps, have been the most original, and nearly the last of

as I hear, the most indecent and improper use of them. This makes the case much worse than that of mere plunder, and the destruction of books and papers by Goths and Vandals, who could not read any of them. It was, however, no small satisfaction to me, to think that my enemies, having the freest access to every paper I had, might be convinced that I had carried on no treasonable correspondence, and that I had nothing to be concerned about besides the effects of their impertinent curiosity.

The destruction of my library did not affect me so much on account of the money I had expended upon it, as the choice of the books; having had particular objects of study, and having collected them with great care, as opportunity served, in the course of many years. It had also been my custom to read almost every book with a pencil in my hand, marking the passages that I wished to look back to, and of which I proposed to make any particular use; and I frequently made an index to such passages on a blank leaf at the end of the book. In consequence of this, other sets of the same work would not, by any means, be of the same value to me; for I have not only lost the books, but the chief fruit of my labor and judgment in reading them.

Also my laboratory not only contained a set of the most valuable and useful instruments of every kind, and original substances for experiments, but other substances, the results

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my publications. The hints and loose materials for it were written in several volumes, not one scrap of which is yet recovered.

XII. Besides these, I had what had cost me much labor, though, as I did not mean to make any public use of them, I do not much regret their loss, viz. a large course of "Lectures on the Constitution and Laws of England," and another on "The History of England," which I had read when I was tutor at Warrington, and of which a syllabus may be seen in the former editions of my "Essay on Education." [1765.] In the same class of manuscripts, not much to be regretted, I place a great variety of miscellaneous juvenile compositions and collections, of which I occasionally made some, though not much, use.

XIII. My "Last Will, Receipts, and Accounts."

of numerous processes, reserved for farther experiments, as every experienced chemist will suppose; and these cannot be replaced without repeating the process of many years. No money can repair damages of this kind. Also several of my instruments were either wholly or in part of my own construction, and such as cannot be purchased any where."

"One of the most mortifying circumstances in this calamity, was the dispersion of a great number of letters from my private friends, from the earliest period of my correspondence, into the hands of persons wholly destitute of generosity or honor. These letters I had carefully arranged, so that I could immediately turn to any of them, when I wished to look back to them, as a memorial of former friendships, or for any other purpose. But they were kept in a box which was ordered by my last will to be burned without inspection. Now, however, letters which I did not wish even my executors to see, were exposed, without mercy or shame, to all the world. No person of honor will even look into a letter not directed to himself. But mine have not only been exposed to every curious, impertinent eye, but, as I am informed, are eagerly perused, commented upon, and their sense perverted, in order to find out something against me.

Some of my private papers are said to have been sent to the secretary of state. But secretaries of state, I presume, are gentlemen, and consider themselves as bound by the same rules of justice and honor that are acknowledged to bind other men, and therefore, if this be the case, these papers will certainly be returned to me.

Of this kind of ill usage, I do not accuse the illiterate mob who made the devastation; for few of them, I suppose, could read; but those persons of better education into whose hands the papers afterwards came. Had persons of this class interposed and exerted themselves, they might, no doubt, have saved the greatest part of this, to me most valuable property, for the loss of which (but more especially for the un-



generous use that was made of it) no compensation can be made me."

"That the true source of the late riots in Birmingham was religious bigotry, and the animosity of the high-church party against the Dissenters, and especially against the Presbyterians and Unitarians, and not the commemoration of the French Revolution, is evident from all that has passed before, at, and after the day.

In the public-houses where the people were inflaming themselves with liquor all that day and some time before, there were heard execrations of the most horrid kind against the Presbyterians. One person was heard not only to wish damnation to them, but that "God Almighty would make a week's holiday for the purpose of damning them." The mob did not arrive at the hotel till more than two hours after the company had left it, and there they demanded only myself, who had not been there. No part of their vengeance fell upon any churchman, whether at the dinner or not. After demolishing the two meeting-houses, and every thing belonging to me, their next objects were the houses of Mr. Taylor and Mr. John Ryland, who were well known to have been much averse to the scheme of the dinner; and during the whole course of the outrages, the constant cry was **CHURCH AND KING, and DOWN WITH THE PRESBYTERIANS.**

That the celebration of the French Revolution was not the true cause of the riots, has indeed sufficiently appeared from the narrative part of this work. That the plan was laid some time before, and that proper persons were provided to conduct it, is probable from this circumstance, that those in the mob who directed the rest (who were evidently not of the lowest class, and who were sometimes called their leaders), were not known to hundreds of all descriptions of the inhabitants of the town, who observed them attentively; so that persons who were no Dissenters, concluded that they came from a distance, and probably from London. The proper Birmingham mob were often persuaded to desist from their

attempts, till they were joined by these men, who both instigated them to mischief and directed them how to proceed in the shortest and most effectual manner."

"The exultation of the high-church party, not only in Birmingham, but through the kingdom in general, on the success of this crusade, was undisguised and boundless. All the newspapers both in town and country, in the conduct of which they had particular influence, were full of the grossest abuse of the Dissenters, and especially of myself, and such narratives of the proceedings were published as cannot be accounted for from mistake or misapprehension, but must have been wilfully fabricated for the worst of purposes.

There were many of the high-church party who did not hesitate to say that, if the mischief had terminated with the destruction of my house, and every thing belonging to me, all had been well. Some openly lamented that the mob had not seized me, or that I had not perished in the conflagration. One clergyman in a public assize sermon called our sufferings wholesome correction; and another declared that, if all my writings were put together, and myself were placed on the top of them, he should rejoice to set fire to the pile.

Many of the high-church party were so far from lamenting my sufferings, or complaining of the illegal manner in which the mischief was done, that they scrupled not to justify it, on the pretence, though absolutely groundless, that my writings were hostile to the state; if not directly, yet indirectly so, as being hostile to the church."

"But though many of the clergy expressed the most rancorous sentiments against us, there have appeared on this occasion among them men of the most liberal minds and principles, who expressed the greatest abhorrence of the conduct and sentiments of the rest of their body, and who, together with some generous-minded laity of the Establishment, were among the first to afford me the most substantial assistance."

The following letters written at this time are interesting, as helping to display the character of the occasion and of the man.

“TO REV. T. LINDSEY.

*Dudley, July 15, 1791.*

DEAR FRIEND,

WHEN I wrote my last, little did I foresee what soon after happened ; but the will of God be done.

The company were hardly gone from the inn, before a drunken mob rushed into the house, and broke all the windows. They then set fire to our meeting-house, and it is burned to the ground. After that they gutted, and some say burned, the old meeting.

In the mean time, some friends came to tell me that I and my house were threatened, and another brought a chaise to convey me and my wife away. I had not presence of mind to take even my MSS. ; and after we were gone, the mob came and demolished every thing, household goods, library, and apparatus. Indeed, they say the house itself is almost demolished, but happily no fire could be got, so that many things, but I know not what, will be saved.

We thought that when it was day, the mob would disperse, and therefore we kept in the neighbourhood ; but finding they rather increased, and grew more outrageous with liquor, we were advised to go off, and are now on our way to Heath.

My wife behaves with wonderful courage. The recollection of my lost MSS. pains me the most, especially my Notes on the New Testament, which I wanted only five days of getting all transcribed. But, I doubt not, all will be for good in the end. I can hardly ever live at Birmingham again.

In great haste, with my wife's best respects, yours and Mrs. Lindsey's most affectionately.

I am impatient to hear from you and my son at Manchester. We left William safe, though he had been in the mob.”

## "TO MR. RUSSELL.

*London, July 29, 1791.*

DEAR SIR,

I AM willing to hope, from the account of Mr. Lewis and others, that your inquiry goes on pretty well, though not so well as you once expected. Every thing I find, as I expected, depends upon yourself, and I much fear your health will suffer by your constant exertions. I hope, however, you are apprised of this, and that you are not insensible how much depends upon your valuable life. May God preserve you, and give a happy termination to this affair.

On Wednesday I dined with Mr. Sheridan, in order, as he said, to meet Mr. Fox, who, however, was not there, but desired Mr. Sheridan to tell me that he was ready to take the matter up in the House of Commons in whatever manner we should think proper. They conceive that the encouragement given by the court to the high-church party was intended to crush Mr. Fox, and those who took our part, and to intimidate both them and us. I cannot, however, think that there is much in this, and I am very unwilling to connect our cause with that of any political party, as, upon the face of it, it is evidently of a purely religious nature. I therefore differ from most of our friends here, and wish, with you, to show no distrust of government, since our end will be answered, whether they appear in earnest to redress our grievances or not. Our tribunal is our country and the world; and before this our court, as well as ourselves, must appear, and we cannot doubt an equitable decision.

The same bad spirit pervades the whole kingdom, though the storm was, I doubt not, directed to break out here. Had Dr. Price been living, it is taken for granted that Hackney would have suffered as much as Birmingham, and that the College would not have been spared. Mr. Walker's letter, which I enclose, and which I wish you to preserve, will show

you the spirit that prevails at Manchester, and we have similar accounts from all the west of England. It is, indeed, an alarming crisis that things are come to. But we cannot doubt that a wise and good Providence superintends and directs the whole. I long to be with you on many accounts. Mr. Keir thinks it had better be soon than later. It may, however, be, advisable to defer it, till the legal inquiry be over.

With my earnest prayers and best wishes, and with respects to all my friends, especially my fellow-sufferers, I am, dear Sir, yours sincerely."

No reflection need be made on this disgraceful history excepting in the words of Robert Hall, who says, that "to the unenlightened eyes of posterity it will appear a reproach, that in the eighteenth century, an age that boasts its science and improvement, — the first Philosopher in Europe, of a character unblemished and of manners the most mild and gentle, should be torn from his family, and obliged to flee an outcast and a fugitive from the murderous hands of a frantic rabble; — but when they learn that there were not wanting teachers of religion who secretly triumphed in these barbarities, they will pause for a moment and imagine that they are reading the history of Goths or of Vandals."

But there were every where some to be found to sympathize with the sufferer, and addresses of condolence and respect were made to him from public bodies, religious, political, and scientific, both in England and in France. Of all these, none, he says, gave him so much satisfaction as those from his late congregation, and especially from the young persons belonging to it who had attended his classes for religious instruction. His whole correspondence with them is delightful and affecting. The following extract of the second letter from the young people is a specimen.

## “FROM THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE NEW MEETING.

*Birmingham, August 22, 1791.*

DEAR AND RESPECTED SIR,

PERMIT us to indulge our feelings in again addressing you.

When assurances of gratitude and attachment are not necessary, there is a gratification in expressing the prevailing sentiments of the heart; and when you, Sir, are the object, we feel no common ardor. We have too much confidence in your goodness, and have had too many proofs of your affectionate regard to our happiness, to imagine you will think us troublesome.

We have received your affectionate and animating letter. Our tears spoke our feelings. We cannot express them. Language is feeble and inadequate. But we will bind your instructions to our hearts. While we remember whose pupils we have been, we cannot act unworthily. We can never sufficiently express our sense of the obligation you have conferred upon us, but we dwell upon the subject with too much pleasure to omit any opportunity of renewing it. To you, Sir, we are indebted for the desire of improvement. You have given us habits of employing our leisure hours in the cultivation of our understandings, in pursuits that afford delight and advantage, and which are calculated to raise us higher in the scale of being. The love of virtue you have implanted in us by precept and example. We will guard and cherish it; and while we enjoy the fruits of it, our souls exulting shall bless you. You have deprived adversity of its sting, and have enabled us to extend our views with satisfaction beyond the world, by impressing our minds with the strongest evidence of the great truths of Christianity. These advantages, Sir, we have received from you. We feel their importance, and will diffuse them as far as our influence extends. It shall be our grand object to endeavour to follow your example in a firm adherence to what we believe to be the cause of truth, in preserving our minds open to conviction, and in the cultivation



of fortitude, patience and charity. We have, indeed, no slight trial of the latter, when we behold the enlightened and benevolent friend of all mankind, whose life has invariably exhibited, and whose instructions have ever enforced, the practice of every mild and gentle virtue, treated with a cruelty which would disgrace a barbarous age. But we will remember our principles, the principles, Sir, we have imbibed from you, and will say, in the language of philosophy and Christianity, Deluded men, we pity you : may your hearts be turned, and your errors forgiven !”

It is gratifying to know that these addresses were not confined to one party, but that many forgot their differences and prejudices in the desire to do justice to an injured man. “ However some of us,” they say, “ may differ from you in several doctrinal opinions, we are well convinced of the integrity of your character, and think ourselves highly obliged to you for your services in the cause of religious and civil liberty. In this cause we respect you as a confessor ; and admire the magnanimity and meekness, equally honorable to the man and the Christian, with which you have borne the losses you have sustained. The approbation of your own mind, the esteem of the friends of freedom, and the persuasion that your personal misfortunes, under the direction of a wise and benevolent Providence, will finally prove conducive to public good, will, we doubt not, still continue to afford you support, and enable you to rejoice, even in tribulation.”

It was not by words only that he was cheered in his trial. He received relief in large donations of money from various persons and bodies of men ; among the rest a subscription of thirty pounds from a society of Calvinists. So that his pecuniary losses were made up to him, as he states, though what was awarded to him by the courts of law fell two thousand pounds short of them. His friends in London gave him an asylum ; and after it was found that it would be impossible for him to return to Birmingham, the congregation in Hackney, recently under the charge of Dr. Price, invited him

to become their pastor, and he was settled there in November the same year. Here then, four months only after the riots, he was quietly seated again at his wonted employments; knowing that the most virulent ill will was existing towards him in various quarters, and subjected to many vexatious annoyances, yet calmly and happily pursuing his studies as a philosopher and divine, and seeking as always to do good to the world by the efforts of his pen. "I found myself," he says, "as happy as I had been at Birmingham; and, contrary to general expectation, I opened my lectures to young persons with great success, being attended by many from London; and though I lost some of the hearers, I left the congregation in a better situation than that in which I found it. On the whole, I spent my time even more happily at Hackney than ever I had done before, having every advantage for my philosophical and theological studies, in some respect superior to what I had enjoyed at Birmingham; especially from my easy access to Mr. Lindsey, and my frequent intercourse with Mr. Belsham, professor of divinity in the New College, near which I lived. Never, on this side the grave, do I expect to enjoy myself so much as I did by the fireside of Mr. Lindsey, conversing with him and Mrs. Lindsey on theological and other subjects, or in my frequent walks with Mr. Belsham, whose views of most important subjects were, like Mr. Lindsey's the same with my own."

But after a little more than two years, he was convinced that continuance in this situation was impossible, and he prepared to withdraw from it. We give the account in his own words.\* "After the riots in Birmingham, it was the expectation, and evidently the wish of many persons, that I should immediately fly to France or America. But I had no consciousness of guilt to induce me to fly from my country.† On the

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\* Preface to his Fast Sermon, 1794.

† "If, instead of flying from lawless violence I had been flying from public justice, I could not have been pursued with more rancor,

contrary, I came directly to London, and instantly, by means of my friend, Mr Russell, signified to the king's ministers, that I was there, and ready, if they thought proper, to be interrogated on the subject of the riot. But no notice was taken of the message.

Ill treated as I thought I had been, not merely by the populace of Birmingham, for they were the mere tools of their superiors, but by the country in general, which evidently exulted in our sufferings, and afterwards by the representatives of the nation, who refused to inquire into the cause of them, I own I was not without deliberating upon the subject of emigration ; and several flattering proposals were made me, especially from France, which was then at peace within itself, and with all the world ; and I was at one time much inclined to go thither, on account of its nearness to England, the agreeableness of its climate, and my having many friends there.

But I likewise considered that, if I went thither, I should have no employment of the kind to which I had been accustomed ; and the season of active life not being, according to the course of nature, quite over, I wished to make as much use of it as I could. I therefore determined to continue in England, exposed as I was not only to unbounded obloquy and insult, but to every kind of outrage ; and after my invitation

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nor could my friends have been more anxious for my safety. One man, who happened to see me on horseback on one of the nights in which I escaped from Birmingham, expressed his regret that he had not taken me, expecting probably some considerable reward, as he said, it was so easy for him to have done it. My friends earnestly advised me to disguise myself, as I was going to London. But all that was done in that way, was taking a place for me in the mail-coach, which I entered at Worcester, in another name than my own. However, the friend who had the courage to receive me in London, had thought it necessary to provide a dress that should disguise me, and also a method of making my escape, in case the house should have been attacked on my account ; and for some time my friends would not suffer me to appear in the streets."

to succeed my friend, Dr. Price, I had no hesitation about it. Accordingly I took up my residence where I now am, though so prevalent was the idea of my insecurity, that I was not able to take the house in my own name ; and when a friend of mine took it in his, it was with much difficulty that, after some time, the landlord was prevailed upon to transfer the lease to me. He expressed his apprehension, not only of the house that I occupied, being demolished, but also a capital house in which he himself resides, at the distance of no less than twenty miles from London, whither he supposed the rioters would go next, merely for suffering me to live in a house of his.

But even this does not give such an idea of the danger that not only myself, but every person and every thing that had the slightest connexion with me, were supposed to be in, as the following. The managers of one of the principal charities among the Dissenters applied to me to preach their annual sermon, and I had consented. But the treasurer, a man of fortune, who knew nothing more of me than my name, was so much alarmed at it, that he declared he could not sleep. I therefore, to his great relief, declined preaching at all.

When it was known that I was settled where I now am, several of my friends, who lived near me, were seriously advised to remove their papers, and other most valuable effects, to some place of greater safety in London. On the 14th of July, 1792, it was taken for granted by many of the neighbours, that my house was to come down, just as at Birmingham the year before. When the Hackney association was formed, several servants in the neighbourhood actually removed their goods ; and when there was some political meeting at the house of Mr. Breillat, though about two miles from my house, a woman whose daughter was servant in the house contiguous to mine, came to her mistress to entreat that she might be out of the way ; and it was not without much difficulty that she was pacified, and prevailed upon to let her

continue in the house, her mistress saying that she was as safe as herself.

On several other occasions the neighbourhood has been greatly alarmed on account of my being so near them. Nor was this without apparent reason. I could name a person, and to appearance a reputable tradesman, who, in the company of his friends, and in the hearing of one of my late congregation at Birmingham, but without knowing him to be such, declared that, in case of any disturbance, they would immediately come to Hackney, evidently for the purpose of mischief. In this state of things, it is not to be wondered at, that of many servants who were recommended to me, and some that were actually hired, very few could, for a long time, be prevailed upon to live with me.

These facts not only show how general was the idea of my particular insecurity in this country ; but what is of much more consequence, and highly interesting to the country at large, an idea of the general disposition to rioting and violence that prevails in it, and that the Dissenters are the objects of it. Mr. Pitt very justly observed, in his speech on the subject of the riots at Birmingham, that it was “ the effervescence of the public mind.” Indeed the effervescible matter has existed in this country ever since the civil wars in the time of Charles I. and it was particularly apparent in the reign of Queen Anne. But the power of government under the former princes of the House of Hanover, prevented its doing any mischief. The late events show that this power is no longer exerted as it used to be, but that on the contrary, there prevails an idea well or ill-founded, that tumultuary proceedings against Dissenters, will not receive any effectual discouragement. After what has taken place with respect to Birmingham, all idea of much hazard for insulting and abusing the Dissenters, is entirely vanished ; whereas the disposition to injure the Catholics was effectually checked by the proceedings of the year 1780. From that time they have been safe, and I rejoice in it. But from the year 1791, the



Dissenters have been more exposed to insult and outrage than ever.

Having fixed myself at Clapton, unhinged as I had been, and having lost the labor of several years, yet flattering myself that I should end my days here, I took a long lease of my house, and expended a considerable sum in improving it. I also determined, with the assistance of my friends, to resume my philosophical and other pursuits; and after an interruption amounting to about two years, it was with a pleasure that I cannot describe, that I entered my new laboratory, and began the most common preparatory processes, with a view to some original inquiries. With what success I have labored, the public has already in some measure seen, and may see more hereafter.

But though I did not choose (notwithstanding I found myself exposed to continual insult) to leave my native country, I found it necessary to provide for my sons elsewhere. My eldest son was settled in a business, which promised to be very advantageous, at Manchester; but his partner, though a man of liberality himself, informed him, on perceiving the general prevalence of the spirit which produced the riots in Birmingham, that, owing to his relationship to me, he was under the necessity of proposing a separation, which accordingly took place.

On this he had an invitation to join another connexion, in a business in which the spirit of party could not have much affected him; but he declined it. And after he had been present at the assizes at Warwick, he conceived such an idea of this country, that I do not believe any proposal, however advantageous, would have induced him to continue in it; so much was he affected on perceiving his father treated as I had been.

Determining to go to America, where he had no prospect but that of being a farmer, he wished to spend a short time with a person who had greatly distinguished himself in that way, and one who from his own general principles, and his



friendship for myself, would have given him the best advice and assistance in his power. He, however, declined it, and acknowledged some time after, that had it been known, as it must have been, to his landlord, that he had a son of mine with him, he feared he should have been turned out of his farm.

My second son, who was present both at the riot and the assizes, felt more indignation still, and willingly listened to a proposal to settle in France; and there his reception was but too flattering. However, on the breaking out of the war with this country, all mercantile prospects being suspended, he wished to go to America. There his eldest and youngest brother have joined him, and they are now looking out for a settlement, having as yet no fixed views.

The necessity I was under of sending my sons out of this country, was my principal inducement to send the little property that I had out of it too; so that I had nothing in England besides my library, apparatus, and household goods. By this, I felt myself greatly relieved, it being of little consequence where a man, already turned of sixty, ends his days. Whatever good or evil I have been capable of, is now chiefly done; and I trust that the same consciousness of integrity, which has supported me hitherto, will carry me through any thing that may yet be reserved for me. Seeing, however, no great prospect of doing much good, or having much enjoyment here, I am now preparing to follow my sons; hoping to be of some use to them in their present unsettled state, and that Providence may yet, advancing in years as I am, find me some sphere of usefulness with them.

As to the great odium that I have incurred, the charge of sedition, or my being an enemy to the constitution or peace of my country, is a mere pretence for it; though it has been so much urged, that it is now generally believed, and all attempts to undeceive the public with respect to it, avail nothing at all. The whole course of my studies, from early life, shows how little politics of any kind have been my ob-

ject. Indeed, to have written so much as I have in theology, and to have done so much in experimental philosophy, and at the same time to have had my mind occupied, as it is supposed to have been, with factious politics, I must have had faculties more than human. Let any person only cast his eye over the long list of my publications, and he will see that they relate almost wholly to theology, philosophy, or general literature.

I did, however, when I was a younger man, and before it was in my power to give much attention to philosophical pursuits, write a small anonymous political pamphlet, "On the State of Liberty in this Country," about the time of Mr. Wilkes's election for Middlesex, which gained me the acquaintance, and I may say the friendship, of Sir George Saville, and which I had the happiness to enjoy as long as he lived.

At the request also of Dr. Franklin and Dr. Fothergill, I wrote an Address to the Dissenters on the subject of the approaching rupture with America, a pamphlet which Sir George Saville, and my other friends, circulated in great numbers, and it was thought with some effect.

After this, I entirely ceased to write any thing on the subject of politics, except as far as the business of the "Test Act," and of "Civil Establishments of Religion," had a connexion with politics. And though, at the recommendation of Dr. Price, I was presently after this taken into the family of the Marquis of Lansdowne, and I entered into almost all his views, as thinking them just and liberal, I never wrote a single political pamphlet, or even a paragraph in a newspaper, all the time that I was with him, which was seven years.

I never preached a political sermon in my life ; unless such as, I believe, all Dissenters usually preach on the fifth of November, in favor of civil and religious liberty, may be said to be political. And on these occasions, I am confident, that I never advanced any sentiment but such as, until of late years, would have tended to recommend, rather than render me ob-

noxious, to those who direct the administration of this country. And the doctrines which I adopted when young, and which were even popular then (except with the clergy, who were at that time generally disaffected to the family on the throne), I cannot abandon, merely because the times are so changed, that they are now become unpopular, and the expression and communication of them hazardous.

Farther, though I by no means disapprove of societies for political information, such as are now every where discountenanced and generally suppressed, I never was a member of any of them; nor, indeed, did I ever attend any public meeting, if I could decently avoid it, owing to habits acquired in studious and retired life.

From a mistake of my talents and disposition, I was invited by many of the departments in France, to represent them in the present National Convention, after I had been made a citizen of France, on account of my being considered as one who had been persecuted for my attachment to the cause of liberty here. But though the invitation was repeated with the most flattering importunity, I never hesitated about declining it.

I can farther say with respect to politics, concerning which, I believe, every Englishman has some opinion or other (and at present, owing to the peculiar nature of the present war, it is almost the only topic of general conversation), that, except in company, I hardly ever think of the subject, my reading, meditation, and writing, being almost wholly engrossed by theology and philosophy; and of late, as for many years before the riots in Birmingham, I have spent a very great proportion of my time, as my friends well know, in my laboratory.

If, then, my real crime has not been sedition, or treason, what has it been? For every effect must have some adequate cause, and therefore the odium that I have incurred, must have been owing to something in my declared sentiments or conduct, that has exposed me to it. In my opinion, it can-

not have been any thing but my open hostility to the doctrines of the established church, and more especially to all civil establishments of religion whatever. This has brought upon me the implacable resentment of the great body of the clergy; and they have found other methods of opposing me besides argument, and that use of the press, which is equally open to us all. They have also found an able ally and champion in Mr. Burke, who (without any provocation except that of answering his book on the French Revolution) has taken several opportunities of inveighing against me, in a place where he knows I cannot reply to him, and from which he also knows that his accusation will reach every corner of the country, and consequently thousands of persons who will never read any writings of mine. They have had another, and still more effectual vehicle of their abuse, in what are called the *treasury newspapers*, and other popular publications.

By these and other means, the same party spirit which was the cause of the riots in Birmingham, has been increasing ever since, especially in that neighbourhood. A remarkable instance of this may be seen in a "Letter" addressed, but not sent to me, from Mr. Foley, rector of Stourbridge, who acknowledges the satisfaction that he and his brethren have received from one of the grossest and coarsest pieces of abuse of me that has yet appeared, which, as a curious specimen of the kind, I inserted in the "Appendix of my Appeal," and in which I am represented as no better than Guy Fawkes, or the devil himself. This very Christian divine recommends to the members of the established church, to decline all commercial dealings with the Dissenters, as an effectual method of exterminating them. This method has been actually adopted in many parts of England. Also great numbers of the best farmers and artisans in England, have been dismissed because they would not go to the established church. "Defoe's Shortest Way with the Dissenters," would have taught the friends of the church a more effectual method

still. And yet this Mr. Foley, whom I never saw, and who could not have had any particular cause of enmity to me, had, like Mr. Madan of Birmingham, a character for liberality. What, then, have we to expect from others, when we find so much bigotry and rancor in such men as these?

Many times, by the encouragement of persons from whom better things might have been expected, I have been burned in effigy along with Mr. Paine; and numberless insulting and threatening letters have been sent to me from all parts of the kingdom. It is not possible for any man to have conducted himself more peaceably than I have done all the time that I have lived at Clapton, yet it has not exempted me not only from the worst suspicions, but very gross insults. A very friendly and innocent club, which I found in the place, has been considered as jacobin, chiefly on my account; and at one time there was cause of apprehension that I should have been brought into danger for lending one of Mr. Paine's books. But with some difficulty the neighbourhood was satisfied that I was innocent.

As nothing had been paid to me on account of damages in the riot, when I published the second part of my "Appeal to the Public" on the subject, it may be proper to say, that it was paid some time in the beginning of the year 1793, with interest only from the first of January of the same year, though the injury was received in July, 1791; when equity evidently required, that it ought to have been allowed from the time of the riot, especially as, in all the cases, the allowance was far short of the loss. In my case it fell short, as I have shown, not less than two thousand pounds. And the losses sustained by the other sufferers far exceeded mine. Public justice also required that, if the forms of law, local enmity or any other cause, had prevented our receiving full indemnification, it should have been made up to us from the public treasury, the great end of all civil government being protection from violence, or an indemnification for it. Whatever



we might in equity claim, the country owes us, and, if it be just, will some time or other pay, and with interest.

I would farther observe, that since, in a variety of cases, money is allowed where the injury is not of a pecuniary nature, merely because no other compensation can be given, the same should have been done with respect to me, on account of the destruction of my manuscripts, the interruption of my pursuits, the loss of a pleasing and advantageous situation, &c. &c. and had the injury been sustained by a clergyman, he would, I doubt not, have claimed, and been allowed, very large damages on this account. So far, however, was there from being any idea of the kind in my favor, that my counsel advised me to make no mention of my manuscript "Lectures on the Constitution of England," a work about as large as that of Blackstone (as may be seen by the syllabus of the particular lectures, sixty-three in all, published in the first edition of my "Essays on a Course of Liberal Education, for Civil and Active Life"), because it would be taken for granted, that they were of a seditious nature, and would therefore have been of disservice to me with the jury. Accordingly they were, in the account of my losses, included in the article of so much paper. After these losses, had there been nothing but the justice of my country to look to, I must have sunk under the burden, incapable of any farther exertions. It was the seasonable generosity of my friends that prevented this, and put it in my power, though with the unavoidable loss of nearly two years, to resume my former pursuits.

A farther proof of the excessive bigotry of this country is, that, though the clergy of Birmingham resenting what I advanced in the first part of my "Appeal," replied to it, and pledged themselves to go through with the inquiry along with me, till the whole truth should be investigated, they have made no reply to the "Second Part of my Appeal," in which I brought specific charges against themselves, and other persons by name, proving them to have been the promoters and abettors of the riot; and yet they have as much respect shown



to them as ever, and the country at large pays no attention to it. Had the clergy been the injured persons, and Dissenters the rioters, unable to answer the charges brought against them, so great would have been the general indignation at their conduct, that I am persuaded it would not have been possible for them to continue in the country.

I could, if I were so disposed, give my readers many more instances of the bigotry of the clergy of the church of England with respect to me, which could not fail to excite, in generous minds, equal indignation and contempt; but I forbear. Had I, however, foreseen what I am now witness to, I certainly should not have made any attempt to replace my library or apparatus, and I soon repented of having done it. But this being done, I was willing to make some use of both before another interruption of my pursuits. I began to philosophize and make experiments rather late in life, being nearly forty, for want of the necessary means of doing any thing in this way; and my pursuits have been much interrupted by removals (never indeed chosen by myself, but rendered necessary by circumstances), and my time being now short, I hoped to have had no occasion for more than one, and that a final remove. But the circumstances above mentioned have induced me, though with great and sincere regret, to undertake another, and to a greater distance than any that I have hitherto made.

I profess not to be unmoved by the aspect of things exhibited in this discourse. But notwithstanding this, I should willingly have awaited my fate in my native country, whatever it had been, if I had not had sons in America, and if I did not think that a field of public usefulness, which is evidently closing upon me here, might open to more advantage there.

I own also, that I am not unaffected by such unexampled punishments as those of Mr. Muir, and my friend, Mr. Palmer, for offences, which, if, in the eye of reason, they be any at all, are slight, and very insufficiently proved; a measure so subversive of that freedom of speaking and acting, which has

hitherto been the great pride of Britons. But the sentence of Mr. Winterbotham, for delivering from the pulpit what I am persuaded he never did deliver, and which, similar evidence might have drawn upon myself, or any other Dissenting minister who was an object of general dislike, has something in it still more alarming. But I trust that conscious innocence would support me as it does him, under whatever prejudiced and violent men might do to me, as well as say of me. But I see no occasion to expose myself to danger, without any prospect of doing good, or to continue any longer in a country in which I am so unjustly become the object of general dislike, and not retire to another, where I have reason to think I shall be better received. And I trust that the same good Providence which has attended me hitherto, and made me happy in my present situation and all my former ones, will attend and bless me in what may still be before me. In all events, the will of God be done.

I cannot refrain from repeating again, that I leave my native country with real regret, never expecting to find any where else society so suited to my disposition and habits, such friends as I have here (whose attachment has been more than a balance to all the abuse I have met with from others), and especially to replace one particular Christian friend, in whose absence I shall, for some time at least, find all the world a blank. Still less can I expect to resume my favorite pursuits with any thing like the advantages I enjoy here. In leaving this country, I also abandon a source of maintenance, which I can but ill bear to lose. I can, however, truly say that I leave it without any resentment or ill will. On the contrary, I sincerely wish my countrymen all happiness; and when the time for reflection (which my absence may accelerate) shall come, they will, I am confident, do me more justice. They will be convinced that every suspicion they have been led to entertain to my disadvantage, has been ill founded, and that I have even some claim to their gratitude and esteem. In this case, I shall look with satisfaction to the

time when, if my life be prolonged, I may visit my friends in this country ; and perhaps I may, notwithstanding my removal for the present, find a grave (as I believe is naturally the wish of every man) in the land that gave me birth."

As the time drew near when he was to sail, testimonials of respect and regret poured in upon him from various quarters. Of these one of the most gratifying was from Cambridge. "A few gentlemen of the University, of all ranks," (to use the words of one of them), "justly indignant that this great philosopher and most amiable man should be banished his country by a church-and-king mob, connived at, if not encouraged by, the government of the day," presented him on his departure a handsome silver inkstand, with this inscription: "TO JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL. D. &c. on his departure into exile, from a few members of the University of Cambridge, who regret that this expression of their esteem should be occasioned by the ingratitude of their country."

On the 30th of March, he delivered his farewell sermon at Hackney, from Acts xx. 32. His chapel was crowded, as it had been for many successive Sabbaths, by those who were anxious to receive the last instructions of so eminent a teacher. The next Sabbath, April 6, he passed in the family of his friends in Essex street, and worshipped in Essex street chapel. It was his last day in England. He sailed the 7th of April, and arrived at New York, after a long and unpleasant voyage, the 4th of June. While at sea he wrote his "Observations on the prevalence of Infidelity," and occupied himself in the study of the New Testament; "which," he says in a letter to Mr. Lindsey, "I think I read with more satisfaction than ever. Unbelievers, I am confident, do not read it, except with a predisposition to cavil." In another letter, immediately on his arrival, he writes thus.

"Our society in the cabin was agreeable enough, though the majority were aristocratically inclined; but all in the steerage were zealous republicans, and persons of good character, and several of good property. In the steerage, also,

there was more religion than in the cabin, but they were universally Calvinists, though the majority very moderate, as you will suppose from their applying to me to perform divine service to them ; which I did with much satisfaction, when the weather and other circumstances would permit, several in the cabin joining us, though some of them were unbelievers, but for want of information. This is the case with Mr. Lyon, a most excellent man, who is now reading my “ Sermons on the Evidences of Revelation,” and, I hope, to good purpose. He, like thousands of others, told me that he was so much disgusted with the doctrines of the Church of England, especially the Trinity, that he considered the whole business as an imposition, without farther inquiry.

The confinement in the ship would not have been disagreeable if I could have written with convenience, but I could do little more than read. I read the whole of the Greek Testament, and the Hebrew Bible as far as the first Book of Samuel ; and, I think, with more satisfaction than ever. I also read through Hartley’s second volume, and, for amusement, I had several books of voyages, and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, which I read through. I always admired his Latin versification. If I had a Virgil, I should have read him through, too. I read a great deal of Buchanan’s poems, and some of Petrarch *de remediis*, and Erasmus’s Dialogues ; also Peter Pindar’s poems, which Mr. Lyon had with him, and which pleased me much more than I expected. He is Paine in verse. Though it was particularly inconvenient to write long hand, I composed about as much as will make two sermons on the causes of infidelity, which will make a proper addition to the volume of my discourses. If I do not print them here, I will send you a copy. Now that I have access to the first volume of Hartley, in the fine edition Mrs. Lindsey gave me, I think I can improve what I wrote. The second volume I had in the ship, was an odd volume of the set that was destroyed in the riot.”

“ I never saw any place that I liked so well as New York.

It far exceeds my expectations, and my reception is too flattering, no form of respect being omitted. I have received two formal addresses, to which I have given answers. More, I hear, are coming; and almost every person of the least consequence in the place, has been, or is coming, to call upon me. This is rather troublesome, but it shows the difference of the two countries. Every thing that bore the name of king or queen is changed, as streets, &c., &c., and yet this is the most aristocratical place on the continent. I am lodged in the house which was the head-quarters of generals Howe and Clinton, in view of the bay, which is the finest prospect that I remember ever to have seen.

This must be a glorious country, and I doubt not of finding a peaceable and useful establishment in it. When that is accomplished, my only wish will be to have you, and a few other Christian friends, to come and end their days with us. But we must not promise ourselves too much in this world.

Say for me every thing that a grateful heart can dictate, both for myself, my wife, and my son, to Mrs. Rayner. Yours and Mrs. Lindsey's most affectionately."

Again he writes, June 15.

"We have now been here near a fortnight, and I begin to expect to hear from you, which is the greatest satisfaction that I expect in this country; but I sometimes think that every thing here is so promising and every thing with you so threatening, that perhaps even you and Mrs. Lindsey may be induced to end your days with us. To accomplish this, I should at any time come over and fetch you. Indeed, the difference between the aspect of things here and with you is not to be expressed. I feel as if I were in another world. I never before could conceive how satisfactory it is to have the feeling that I now have, from a sense of perfect security and liberty, all men having equal rights and privileges, and speaking and acting as if they were sensible of it. Here are no beggars to be seen, and families are easily maintained by any kind of labor; and whether it be the effect of general liberty,



or some other cause, I find many more clever men, men capable of conversing with propriety and fluency on all subjects relating to government, than I have met with any where in England. I have seen many members of Congress on their return from it, and without exception, they seem to be men of first rate ability, though some of them plain in their manners.

With respect to myself, the difference is great indeed. In England, I was an object of the greatest aversion to every person connected with government; whereas here, they are those who show me the most respect. With you, the Episcopal church is above every thing. In this city, it makes a decent figure, but the Presbyterians are much above them, and the governor (Clinton), who is particularly attentive to me, goes to the meeting-house."

After a short visit at New York and Philadelphia, Dr. Priestley took up his permanent residence at Northumberland. His situation and mode of life there may be seen in the letters which he wrote from that place in October and December.

"The greatest inconvenience attending this situation is a want of a ready communication with Philadelphia. There are no stage-wagons; and the only method of sending heavy goods is by land in the wagons that carry corn to Middletown, on the Susquehannah, and thence by water hither; and the water is so low at this time of the year, that it is not navigable. It is expected to rise a little towards the end of this month; but the best time for it is in the spring, and till midsummer; but then there are few wagons going to Middletown.

Inconvenient as this circumstance and some others make a residence in this place, I prefer it on the whole. Philadelphia is unpleasant, unhealthy, and intolerably expensive; and there I should have little command of my time. Here I can command the whole; and when I get my books and instruments, I hope to do as much as ever I have done. In the mean time, I am not idle. I have some books, and every



day do something towards the continuation of my Church History. I shall finish the next period which will carry the History to the rise of Mahometanism, in about a month, tasking myself every day. My materials will not carry me much farther.

I never read so much Hebrew as I have since I left England. I have nearly finished all the Old Testament, and I never read it with so much satisfaction, especially the prophecies, which I am now attending to. I think I shall read more or less of the Hebrew Bible as long as I live; and shall, when I get my Polyglots, and other helps, take much pleasure in translating more than I undertook before. Having leisure for miscellaneous reading, I have read almost the whole of Tacitus, which I had not done before, and I admire him more than I expected. I shall read many of the best ancient writers, especially the historians, when I get my library.

I have nearly printed the Continuation of my Letters to the Philosophers and Politicians of France, and to a Philosophical Unbeliever; the latter in answer to Mr. Paine's Age of Reason; which is much read, and has made great impression here; nor will you wonder at it, when you consider what kind of Christianity is preached here. I am told that the Quakers read it with great avidity, and they have no knowledge at all of the proper evidence of Christianity, or the doctrines of it. Many of them, therefore, in this country, either actually are, or are easily made unbelievers. There are great expectations, I am told, from my answer to Paine, and I hope it will do good.

I told you that when I came hither I was asked to preach at the Presbyterian meeting-house; but though I am sure I said nothing which could give any Christian just offence, they never asked me again, and I have contented myself with reading a sermon in my own house. Yesterday, however, the officer of a company of soldiers who are passing this way requested me to preach to them, and they got the use of the meeting-house, and some of the people of the place attended;

but little can be done before I get a place to myself, which, if a few persons from England join us, will soon be accomplished, especially if the college be established here, and of this no doubt is now entertained; and the person whose property the greatest part of the town is, has consented to give the ground to build it on. We therefore hope to have the buildings raised the next year, and begin some business, when I hope to be of some use. In the spring, however, I shall go to Philadelphia, and preach a sermon, which I have already composed and transcribed, from *Acts* xvii. 18–20; but I want your cool judgment in this and all my other compositions. I feel myself as a ship without a rudder.”

Again. “Though I am far from being so happy as I was at Hackney, near you and Mr. Belsham, I have a tolerable prospect of being more comfortable when I have got my house built; but I foresee much trouble, as well as expense, attending it. My instruments must remain unpacked, at least in a great measure, till then, and my books are chiefly in a barn and a garret, so that it is not very easy to come at them all. In this respect, however, I do pretty well, and by doing my different tasks every day, have the satisfaction of thinking I do some business, without which I should have little enjoyment of life.

I shall get well acquainted with the Hebrew Bible, a large portion of which I read the first thing every morning, and I give some hours every day to my Church History. The great number of unbelievers here will keep up my attention to the evidences of revelation, and I think I may perhaps add another part to my Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever, on the subject of prophecy. I like Bicheno’s idea of the seven thunders meaning the seven wars which have taken place since the conquests of the Turks, but there is little else that I admire in him. I have had some of the same thoughts that Mr. Garnham has entertained; but I cannot say that they give me the same satisfaction that they do him, and I think he hazards a great deal in foretelling the duration and the issue of the pres-

ent war against the French. I am endeavouring to settle my opinion of the most probable interpretations of the principal prophecies in Daniel and the Revelation, and when I have done it, shall write to you more fully on the subject. I have no satisfaction like that which attends the study of the Scriptures.

Since I wrote last, I have a prospect of being employed as a preacher here. I have a service every Lord's day at my son's house; and several persons, the most respectable in the place, have desired to attend, and even, I hear, talk of building a place of worship for me. To this I shall contribute pretty largely myself, and shall feel most happy in being so employed, and in instructing such young persons as will attend me."

In February, 1796, he visited Philadelphia, and delivered a course of Lectures on the Evidences of Revealed Religion. The congregation that attended, says a lady who was present, were so numerous that the house could not contain them, so that as many were obliged to stand as sit, and even the doorways were crowded with people. During this visit he attended the debates of Congress, on the ratification of Jay's treaty. The passage in which he speaks of them in writing to Mr. Lindsey is not without interest.

"After a long discussion, the House of Representatives have voted, by a majority of three, for carrying the treaty with England into execution. Having much leisure, I have attended to hear much of the debate, and have heard as good speaking as in your House of Commons, and much more decorum. A Mr. Ames speaks as well as Mr. Burke; but, in general, the speakers are more argumentative, and less rhetorical. And whereas there are not with you more than ten or a dozen tolerable speakers, here every member is capable of speaking, which makes interesting debates tedious. A good account of the speeches is taken by short-hand writers, who have a desk for the purpose, and, I believe, many of the speakers correct them afterwards. As the speeches on this

occasion are printed, I will send them to you. The members for the northern states are in general in favor of the treaty, and those from the southern, against it. I am well acquainted with both, and they do not avoid one another, as the heads of parties do in England; and when once any thing is decided by fair voting, all contention ceases."

In the course of the next year Dr. Priestley's situation was rendered yet more solitary by the death of his youngest son and of his wife. These were severe trials, and he often pathetically alludes to them in his letters, showing how deeply he was afflicted and how a Christian faith and hope sustained him. "The time is fast approaching with respect to me," he says, in a letter to Mrs. Barbauld, "when our intercourse from which I have derived so much satisfaction, will be renewed with advantage, and to this future scene late events have drawn my attention in a more particular manner than ever. How much to be pitied are they who are not Christians! What consolation can they have in their sorrows? Mine have sometimes such a mixture of joy, as hardly to deserve the name." "The death of my wife," he says some months afterward, "has made a great change in my feelings; though I never felt so sensibly the happy effects of religion."

In 1797 he again passed some time in Philadelphia, preaching on the Evidences of Christianity, and publishing remarks on the infidel writings of Volney, who was then in that city. The subject of infidelity was that which now supremely interested him. He took little notice of those who were disposed to treat him as a heretic. "Except avowing my sentiments, which I thought it necessary to do, in a single discourse last year, I pay no attention whatever to the Orthodox, and confine myself to the unbelievers, as by much the more formidable enemy of the two." "While I am preaching and writing against the common enemy, they are preaching and writing against me." That any unbeliever can be pious and habitually devout (without which every charac-

ter must be very imperfect) is what I have not yet seen any appearance of."

"How insignificant," he exclaims, "are all subjects, compared to those which relate to religion! And yet I am persuaded I have more pleasure in my philosophical pursuits than any of my unchristian brethren. My views of these subjects give a dignity and importance to them, which, in the eye of the unbeliever, it is impossible they should have." In a similar strain he writes, on hearing of the death of Mrs. Lindsey. "The loss of near friends and the society to which we have been long accustomed, weans us from the world. I have hardly a wish to stay behind, already. When a few more of my friends are gone, I shall wish to go too; and I think of our meeting in another state much more than ever. What an unspeakable blessing is the knowledge of Christianity. What a pearl of great price do unbelievers reject! I have now very little real satisfaction in any studies that are foreign to this. I think I should even drop my philosophical pursuits, but that I consider them as that study of the works of the great Creator, which I shall resume with more advantage hereafter."

In January, 1800, he wrote thus to Mr. Lindsey.

"Your account of my daughter's illness affects me much. So few recover from consumptions, that I have no expectation of it in her case. She will, however, be freed from much trouble in this life, and be well prepared for another; and such is my situation here, and so near am I to the same catastrophe, that such an event affects me much less than it would otherwise do. The removal of a very few more would make me wish to follow them. I have no desire to live on account of any enjoyment that I can reasonably expect in this life; but while I am capable of doing any good, I wish to have the opportunity.

From how much trouble has my wife been relieved! She had a great mind; but the events that have taken place since her death would have affected her deeply. My trials, now



towards the close of life, are as great as I can bear ; though I doubt not that a wise and good Providence overrules all events, and I have daily a more habitual respect to it. Nothing else could support me. I have often said, and I see more reason for it continually, and in my own case, that many events are more to be lamented than the death of children and friends. In that case the mind is relieved from farther anxiety ; and though we have reason to be satisfied when we have done what we think to be our duty, it is not such a satisfaction as leaves the mind fully at ease.

We are frail, imperfect beings, and our faith is at best but weak, and requires to be strengthened by reading and reflection. I never omit reading, and I do it with more satisfaction than ever, a considerable portion of Scripture every day, and by this means my mind is much relieved ; and having good health, my spirits are naturally good. Besides, I often think how small a proportion my afflictions bear to those of many others, and to the great mass of distress that I cannot help thinking is coming on a great part of the world, in which many of the worthiest persons must be involved.

Notwithstanding all my troubles, I have much to be thankful for, especially the means of study, in a valuable library and apparatus, of both which I endeavour to make the best use that I can. I sometimes flatter myself that I could be of some use to the cause of Christianity in France ; and with any reasonable prospect of that, I would cheerfully abandon every thing here, and devote myself wholly to it, whatever I might suffer in consequence of it ; but I must wait the call of God, in the course of his providence. Here I hope I have done some good, and have laid the foundation for more ; but it is not what we expected. We must not, however, despair of the cause. It is advancing, like the planets, when they seem to be stationary, or even retrograde."

The calm and happy state of mind in which this good man approached old age, is rendered evident from the passages now cited. He was in trouble, and in comparative solitude ;



but his faith cheered him ; his interest in high thoughts made him happy. His friends sometimes urged his return to Europe, but he preferred to retain his retirement and repose. "Another removal," he said, "would be the termination of all my labors and pursuits in this world ; and these I will not give up, while I am capable of doing any thing. And I thank God, I never had better health ; though I am not strong, or capable of bearing much bodily exercise, and cannot keep to one thing so long as I used to do. By great regularity in the distribution of my time, and having few avocations, I do almost as much business of one kind or another as I ever did, and I read very little for amusement."

His state of feeling is further depicted in a letter to Mrs. Lindsey, May 8, 1802, after hearing of the illness of her husband.

"I cannot express how much I was affected on reading your letter, though I was apprized of the situation of my best friend by the letters of Mr. Belsham, so that I had no reason to expect any different account. But the few lines he added, with his own hand, quite overcame me ; and if I read them, as I shall do, a hundred times, I shall have the same emotions. Such friendship as his and yours has been to me, can never be exceeded on this side the grave, and, independent of the real emolument, has been a source of such satisfaction to me as I have not derived from any other quarter.

And yet what I feel is not properly grief, for, considering how near we both must be to the close of life, in which we could not promise ourselves much more enjoyment, or be of much more use, what remains cannot, according to the common course of nature, be of much value ; and therefore the privation of it is no great loss ; and considering how soon we may expect, and I hope without much presumption, to meet again in more favorable circumstances, the causes of joy may almost be allowed to balance those of grief.

If you saw me now, you would not flatter me with the

prospect of long surviving my excellent friend. Judging from my illnesses the last year, and my present feelings, I am far from expecting it myself, and, indeed, as it will be the will of God, whatever the event be, and, therefore, no doubt for the best, I cannot say that I greatly wish it. My labors, of whatever kind, and whatever be their value, must be nearly over."

And in a letter to Mr. Lindsey a few weeks later.

"DEAR FRIEND,

*Northumberland, June 26, 1802.*

Whether it be you or Mrs. Lindsey that is my correspondent, I consider it as the same thing. You are alike my friends, and my best friends; and, whoever survives, this correspondence will not, I hope, cease, on this side the grave, while it is possible to continue it. This great change, to which we are making near approaches, I regard, I hope I may say, with more curiosity than anxiety. It is the wise order of Providence that death should intervene between the two different modes of existence; and what engages my thoughts is, the change itself, more than the mere manner of making it. I look at your portrait, and that of Dr. Price, and Mr. Lee, which are always before me, and think of my deceased friends, whose portraits I have not, with peculiar satisfaction, under the idea that I shall, at no great distance, see them again, and I hope with pleasure. But, how we shall meet again and how we shall be employed, we have little or no ground even for conjecture. It should satisfy us, however, that we shall be at the disposal, and under the government, of the same wise and good Being who has superintended us here, and who best knows what place and employment will best suit all of us.

The more I think of the wonderful system of which we are a part, the less I think of any difficulties about the reality or the circumstance of a future state. The resurrection is, really, nothing, compared to the wonders of every day in the regular course of nature; and the only reason why we do not wonder is, because the appearances are common. Whether it be, because I converse less with men, in this remote situa-

tion, I contemplate the scenes of nature, as the production of its great Author, more, and with more satisfaction, than I ever did before ; and the new discoveries that are now making in every branch of science, interest me more than ever in this connexion. I see before us a boundless field of the noblest investigation ; and all that we yet know appears to me as nothing, compared to what we are wholly ignorant of, and do not, as yet, perceive any means of access to it."

Also, in a letter dated Northumberland, July 3, 1802.

"How rejoiced I was to receive your letter, written wholly with your own hand, after your late alarming attack ! I now hope I shall have more of them ; and nothing on this side the grave gives me more satisfaction ; and yet, considering how soon we may hope to meet again, the separation by death should not give us much concern. While we live, we ought to value life, and friendship, especially Christian friendship, as the balm of it. But we have a better life in prospect, and therefore should not regret the parting with the worse, provided we have enjoyed it properly, and improved it so as to have ensured the better. Absolute confidence does not become any man, conscious, as we all must be, of many imperfections, of omissions, if not of commissions ; but surely a general sincere endeavour to do what we apprehend to be our duty, will authorize so much hope as may be the reasonable foundation of joy, with respect to a future state, without being chargeable with arrogance or presumption.

You could not have made choice of a more pleasing or interesting subject than that of the work which you have happily completed, which, as I believe it is in Philadelphia, I expect soon to receive. It occupies my own thoughts, I may say, almost constantly, and is the greatest source of satisfaction that in my present situation, and under my late trials, I enjoy. Indeed, the reflection that we are under the government of the wisest and best of Beings, and that nothing can befall us without his permission, is sufficient to banish the very idea of evil, and to make us regard every thing as a

good for which we ought to be thankful. At the moment, none who have the hearts and feelings of men, but must grieve for many things that he sees and feels; but Christian principles soon bring relief, and are capable of converting all sorrow into joy. But this will be in proportion to the strength of our faith, in consequence of the exercise of it, when, according to Hartley, speculative faith is converted into practical."

"The more I contemplate the great system, the more satisfaction I find in it; and the structure being so perfect, there cannot be a doubt but that the end and use of it, in promoting happiness, will correspond to it. These views, as I take more pleasure than ever in natural history, contribute much to brighten the evening of my days. But my great resource is the Scripture, which I have not, of a long time, passed a single day without reading a portion of, and I am more interested in it continually. I seem now to see it with other eyes, and all other reading is comparatively insipid."

Thus serenely and happily, with a cheerful confidence in divine Providence and a bright hope of heaven, did the life of this Christian philosopher gently draw to its close. Constantly occupied with important studies and strongly interested in great truths, he hardly allowed himself to remember the trials and privations of his lot, while he acknowledged its blessings with strong expressions of admiration and gratitude.

During a visit to Philadelphia, in 1801, he had a severe and dangerous fever, from the effects of which on his constitution he never perfectly recovered. He again visited that city in the spring of 1803, but from that time his health was sensibly declining. His digestive powers were impaired, and he had a difficulty in swallowing food, which increased to such a degree that he finally came to live exclusively on liquids. In June he was much injured by a fall which lamed him. He had become quite deaf, but his eyes were good, and he continued busily engaged with his studies, and said

that he was only anxious to live long enough to complete the printing of the works in which he was engaged. His 'Church History' and 'Notes on the Scriptures' were those which for some time had principally occupied him; he was now preparing his 'Comparison of the Greek Philosophy with Christianity.' Feeble as he had become, he did not remit his diligence. "To give some idea," says his son, "of the exertions he made even at this time, it is only necessary for me to say, that besides his miscellaneous reading, which was at all times very great, he read through all the works quoted in his comparison of the different systems of the Grecian philosophers with Christianity, composed that work, and transcribed the whole of it, in less than three months. He took the precaution of transcribing one day in long hand, what he had composed the day before in short hand, that he might by that means leave the work complete as far as it went, should he not live to complete the whole. During this period, he composed in a day his second reply to Dr. Linn."

The remainder of the history must be given in his son's own words.

"In the last fortnight in January [1804] he was troubled with alarming fits of indigestion; his legs swelled nearly to his knees, and his weakness increased very much. I wrote for him, while he dictated, the concluding section of his "New Comparison," and the Preface and Dedication. The finishing this work was a source of great satisfaction to him, as he considered it as a work of as much consequence as any he had ever undertaken. The first alarming symptom of approaching dissolution, was his being unable to speak to me upon my entering his room, on Tuesday morning, the 31st of January. In his diary I find he stated his situation as follows: 'Ill all day — not able to speak for nearly three hours.' When he was able to speak, he told me he had slept well (as he uniformly had done through the whole of his illness; so that he never would suffer me, though I frequently requested he would do it, to sleep in the same room with him) that he felt



as well as possible ; that he got up and shaved himself (which he never omitted doing every morning, till within two days of his death) ; that he went to his laboratory, and then found his weakness very great ; that he got back with difficulty ; that just afterward his granddaughter, a child of about six or seven years old, came to him to claim the fulfilment of a promise he had made her the evening before, to give her a five-penny bit. He gave her the money, and was going to speak to her, but found himself unable. He informed me of this, speaking very slowly a word at a time ; and added, that he had never felt more pleasantly in his whole life, than he did during the time he was unable to speak. After he had taken his medicine, which was bark and laudanum, and drank a bason of strong mutton broth, he recovered surprisingly, and talked with cheerfulness to all who called upon him, but as though he was fully sensible that he had not long to live. He consented for the first time that I should sleep in the room with him.

On Wednesday, February 1, he writes, ‘ I was at times much better in the morning : capable of some business : continued better all day.’ He spake this morning as strong as usual, and took in the course of the day a good deal of nourishment with pleasure. He said, that he felt a return of strength, and with it there was a duty to perform. He read a good deal in ‘ Newcome’s Translation of the New Testament,’ and ‘ Stevens’s History of the War.’ In the afternoon he gave me some directions how to proceed with the printing his work, in case he should die. He gave me directions to stop the printing of the second volume, and to begin upon the third, that he might see how it was begun, and that it might serve as a pattern to me to proceed by.

On Thursday, the 2d, he wrote thus for the last time in his diary : ‘ Much worse : incapable of business : Mr. Kennedy came to receive instructions about printing, in case of my death.’ He sat up, however, a great part of the day, was cheerful, and gave Mr. Cooper and myself some directions,



with the same composure as though he had only been about to leave home for a short time. Though it was fatiguing to him to talk, he read a good deal in the works above mentioned.

On Friday he was much better. He sat up a good part of the day reading 'Newcome;' 'Dr. Disney's Translation of the Psalms;' and some chapters in the 'Greek Testament,' which was his daily practice. He corrected a proof sheet of the 'Notes on Isaiah.' When he went to bed he was not so well; he had an idea he should not live another day. At prayer-time he wished to have the children kneel by his bedside, saying it gave him great pleasure to see the little things kneel; and, thinking he possibly might not see them again, he gave them his blessing.

On Saturday, the 4th, my father got up for about an hour while his bed was made. He said he felt more comfortable in bed than up. He read a good deal, and looked over the first sheet of the third volume of the 'Notes,' that he might see how we were likely to go on with it; and having examined the Greek and Hebrew quotations, and finding them right, he said he was satisfied we should finish the work very well. In the course of the day he expressed his gratitude in being permitted to die quietly in his family, without pain, with every convenience and comfort he could wish for. He dwelt upon the peculiarly happy situation in which it had pleased the Divine Being to place him in life; and the great advantage he had enjoyed in the acquaintance and friendship of some of the best and wisest men in the age in which he lived, and the satisfaction he derived from having led an useful as well as a happy life.

On Sunday he was much weaker, and only sat up in an armed chair while his bed was made. He desired me to read to him the eleventh chapter of John. I was going on to read to the end of the chapter, but he stopped me at the fortyfifth verse. He dwelt for some time on the advantage he had derived from reading the scriptures daily, and advised me to do

the same ; saying, that it would prove to me, as it had done to him, a source of the purest pleasure. He desired me to reach him a pamphlet which was at his bed's head, 'Simpson on the Duration of Future Punishment.' — 'It will be a source of satisfaction to you to read that pamphlet,' said he, giving it to me, 'it contains my sentiments, and a belief in them will be a support to you in the most trying circumstances, as it has been to me. We shall all meet finally ; we only require different degrees of discipline, suited to our different tempers, to prepare us for final happiness.' Upon Mr. — coming into his room, he said, 'You see, Sir, I am still living.' Mr. — observed, he would always live. 'Yes,' said he, 'I believe I shall ; and we shall all meet again in another and a better world.' He said this with great animation, laying hold on Mr. —'s hand in both his.

Before prayers he desired me to reach him three publications, about which he would give me some directions next morning. His weakness would not permit him to do it at that time.

At prayers he had all the children brought to his bedside as before. After prayers they wished him a good night, and were leaving the room. He desired them to stay, spoke to them each separately. He exhorted them all to continue to love each other. 'And you, little thing,' speaking to Eliza, 'remember the hymn you learned ; "Birds in their little nests agree," &c. I am going to sleep as well as you : for death is only a good, long, sound sleep in the grave, and we shall meet again.' He congratulated us on the dispositions of our children ; said it was a satisfaction to see them likely to turn out well ; and continued for some time to express his confidence in a happy immortality, and in a future state, which would afford us an ample field for the exertion of our faculties.

On Monday morning, the sixth of February, after having lain perfectly still till four o'clock in the morning, he called to me, but in a fainter tone than usual, to give him some

wine and tincture of bark. I asked him how he felt. He answered he had no pain, but appeared fainting away gradually. About an hour after, he asked me for some chicken-broth, of which he took a tea-cup full. His pulse was quick, weak, and fluttering, his breathing, though easy, short. About eight o'clock, he asked me to give him some egg and wine. After this he lay quite still till ten o'clock, when he desired me and Mr. Cooper to bring him the pamphlets we had looked out the evening before. He then dictated as clearly and distinctly as he had ever done in his life, the additions and alterations he wished to have made in each. Mr. Cooper took down the substance of what he said, which, when he had done, I read to him. He said Mr. Cooper had put it in his own language; he wished it to be put in his. I then took a pen and ink to his bed-side. He then repeated over again, nearly word for word, what he had before said; and when I had done, I read it over to him. He said, 'That is right; I have now done.' About half an hour after, he desired, in a faint voice, that we would move him from the bed on which he lay to a cot, that he might lie with his lower limbs horizontal, and his head upright. He died in about ten minutes after we had moved him, but breathed his last so easy, that neither myself or my wife, who were both sitting close to him, perceived it at the time. He had put his hand to his face, which prevented our observing it."

It is not intended elaborately to draw the character of Dr. Priestley. This is sufficiently disclosed in the narrative of his life and by the tone of his writings. They show that he was a man of various talents, and indefatigable industry in the use of them. His theological and miscellaneous writings have been collected in twenty-four large octavo volumes, and his other works would nearly equal these in quantity. The whole number of his publications exceeded one hundred and thirty. He was enabled to effect so much by strict habits of method and a great facility in labor; which enabled him, though accomplishing more than most men, to have as much

leisure as any. His remarkable rapidity in thinking and writing was undoubtedly a snare to him, as it sometimes betrayed him into carelessness and error, though the instances of this are certainly far fewer than has been sometimes represented. His favorite subjects of study were those of natural philosophy, especially chemistry, and revealed religion. In the former, he was a great discoverer, and has been called the Father of modern chemistry. To the latter he applied himself with an earnest faith and devoted attachment, which increased as he advanced in life, and which displayed itself in perpetual efforts to make known its evidences and to advance its interests. When one perceives how this was the object nearest his heart, and how much of his time and labor was occupied in writing and publishing against infidelity, he cannot but feel amazed and mortified at that violence of theological party spirit which classes this defender of the faith with unbelievers. His peculiar views of Christianity were undoubtedly very far from agreeing with those which generally prevail, and they were oftentimes expressed in bold and unmeasured language, adapted to shock prejudice rather than to conciliate and convince. This was his fault; from which both his reputation and his principles have suffered. But it grew out of that frankness and simplicity which so eminently distinguished him, and which made him to his friends the object of such confidence and attachment. Simple as a child, he knew no disguise; he exposed himself naked, unguarded, heedless, to all alike, not weighing words or calculating consequences, but uttering whatever lay in his thought at the moment in the first words that occurred to him. There was something in this childlike, confidential, unsuspecting mode of intercourse extremely winning to those who were intimately associated with him; and, in connexion with his cheerfulness, equanimity, and gentleness, it made him an object of the deepest and most enthusiastic attachment. Few have ever had warmer friends. But it obviously exposed him to misapprehension and cavil from those who knew him not, and who regarded his opinions with

aversion. They put a wrong construction upon it and were exasperated by it; and they have signally punished him for it, by culling from his works a quantity of his hasty and rash expressions, and publishing them to the world as the deliberate judgments of those who adopt liberal opinions in religion. And as he was equally undisguised and unwary in his remarks on the faults of his own friends, they have not failed to triumph in what they regard as his testimony to the evil consequences of his religious system. These citations from his works, not very numerous after all, have been copied from one writer to another, till they have become a sort of stock-in-trade in controversy, and may be expected to appear as a matter of course in every new writer whose purpose is to cast obloquy on Unitarian views.

Certainly there are some of his speculations and modes of speculating, there is much in his hastiness and something in his offensiveness, which are not to be imitated or approved. But, alas, how few controversial writers have a right to cast the first stone! and he certainly is not to be judged for this fault without reference to his known disposition and character. And respecting these, as they appeared in ordinary and private life, there is but one testimony. Those who least favored his theological opinions were among the first to acknowledge and honor his worth as a man. Robert Hall, as remarkable for his hearty abuse of Unitarianism as for his talents and eloquence, could not withhold his eulogy of the character of Priestley.\* “The religious tenets of Dr. Priestley appear to me erroneous in the extreme; but I should be sorry to suffer any difference of sentiment to diminish my sensibility to virtue or my admiration of genius. From him the poisoned arrow will fall harmless.” — “Distinguished merit will ever rise superior to oppression, and draw lustre from reproach.”

The language of the celebrated and learned Dr. Parr was

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\* See also above, p. xxxvii.



equally strong. "Let Dr. Priestley," he says, "be confuted where he is mistaken ; let him be exposed where he is superficial ; let him be repressed where he is dogmatical ; let him be rebuked where he is censorious. But let not his attainments be depreciated — because they are numerous, almost without a parallel. Let not his talents be ridiculed — because they are superlatively great. Let not his morals be vilified — because they are correct without austerity, and exemplary without ostentation — because they present, even to common observers, the innocence of a hermit, and the simplicity of a patriarch ; and because a philosophic eye will at once discover in them the deep fixed root of virtuous principle, and the solid trunk of virtuous habit."

Indeed such was the influence of his character, that the strongest prejudices gave way on a personal acquaintance, and were changed to affection and respect. A gentleman of Philadelphia who knew him well, has recorded the two following anecdotes.\*

"The first of these anecdotes," he says, "was related to me a very few years ago by the late Rev. William Rogers, D. D., a Baptist minister, whose sentiments were highly Calvinistic, but who was strongly attached to Dr. Priestley, and took pleasure in cultivating his acquaintance. The doctor, when in Philadelphia, would occasionally call on Dr. Rogers, and without any formal invitation pass an evening at his house. One afternoon he was there when Dr. Rogers was not at home, having been assured by Mrs. Rogers that her husband would soon be there. Meanwhile, Mr. ———, a Baptist minister called, and being a person of rough manners, Mrs. Rogers was a good deal concerned lest he should say something disrespectful to Dr. Priestley in case she introduced the Doctor to him. At last, however, she ventured to announce Dr. Priestley's name, who put out his hand ; but

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\* Mr. James Taylor. See Rutt's *Life and Correspondence of Priestley*, Vol. II. 264, 343.



instead of taking it, the other immediately drew himself back, saying, as if astonished to meet with Dr. Priestley in the house of one of his brethren, and afraid of being contaminated by having any social intercourse with him, ‘Dr. Joseph Priestley! I can’t be cordial.’

It is easy to imagine that by this speech Mrs. Rogers was greatly embarrassed. Dr. Priestley observing this, instantly relieved her by saying, and with all that benevolent expression of countenance and pleasantness of manner for which he was remarkable, ‘Well, well, Madam, you and I can be cordial; and as Dr. Rogers will be soon with us, Mr. —— and he can converse together, so that we shall all be very comfortable.’ Thus encouraged, Mrs. Rogers asked Dr. Priestley some questions relative to the Scripture prophecies, to which he made suitable replies; and before Dr. Rogers arrived, Mr. —— was listening with much attention, sometimes making a remark, or putting a question. The evening was passed in the greatest harmony, with no inclination on the part of Mr. —— to terminate the conversation. At last Dr. Priestley, pulling out his watch, informed Mr. —— that as it was ten o’clock, it was time that two old men like them were at their quarters. The other at first was not willing to believe that Dr. Priestley’s watch was accurate; but finding that it was correct, he took his leave with apparent regret, observing, that he had never spent a shorter and more pleasant evening. He then went away, Dr. Priestley accompanying him until it became necessary to separate. Next morning he called on his friend Dr. Rogers, when he made the following frank and manly declaration: ‘You and I well know that Dr. Priestley is quite wrong in regard to his theology; but, notwithstanding this, he is a great and good man, and I behaved to him at our first coming together like a fool and a brute.’”

“A gentleman of New York, of excellent understanding, but a confirmed Calvinist, with whom I was in habits of friendly intercourse, although he had never seen Dr. Priest-

ley, would frequently speak of him as a person of no vital religion, and as one with whom he would not choose to become intimately acquainted. Having occasion to visit Philadelphia, he called on me immediately on his arrival. Dr. Priestley was spending the afternoon with me, and my friend being seated next to the doctor, seemed so much engaged in conversation with him, that he had little to say to any one else. On taking his leave, to my astonishment he exclaimed, 'Who is that delightful old gentleman I have been conversing with?' for when introduced he had not attended to the name. As I naturally concluded that the bare mention of this would instantly destroy the charm, I was in no haste to gratify his curiosity; but when the question was repeated and answered, he replied, with his usual frankness, 'All that I have formerly said respecting Dr. Priestley is nonsense. I have now seen him for myself, and, remember, I will never forgive you if you do not put me in the way of seeing more of him.'

At Philadelphia, Dr. Priestley's name is often mentioned with admiration and warm feeling by those who knew his worth, and who, notwithstanding their difference of religious belief, courted his society, and cultivated his friendship. A very few years ago, when a young popular preacher spoke of Dr. Priestley in the pulpit as similar to Hume and Voltaire, the injustice of the comparison was openly complained of by many worthy persons of different denominations, who were old enough to remember with what ability and effect Dr. Priestley had pleaded the cause of divine revelation at Philadelphia, particularly in those discourses delivered in 1796."

Mr. W. Matthews, who was persuaded one Sunday afternoon to accompany a friend to Dr. Priestley's chapel in Birmingham, has told us what became of his previous impressions respecting him. He had been accustomed to hear him preached against as "a demon of heresy," "a proud and haughty scorner."

"When we entered the place," he says, "we found a man

of about the middle stature, slenderly made, remarkably placid, modest, and courteous, pouring out, with the simplicity of a child, the great stores of his most capacious mind to a considerable number of young persons of both sexes ; whom, with the familiarity and kindness of a friend, he encouraged to ask him questions, either during the lecture or after it, if he advanced any thing which wanted explanation, or struck them in a light different from his own. The impression made upon us was so strong, that we never failed afterwards to attend on such occasions in order to profit by his lessons, and we frequently went to hear him preach, until he was driven from the town in 1791.

His lectures were peculiarly instructive, and the general tenor of his sermons was practical, urging to the cultivation of universal benevolence, the earnest pursuit of knowledge, and the most unrestrained free inquiry upon all important subjects. He was the most unassuming, candid man I ever knew ; and never did I hear from his lips, either in lecture or sermon, one illiberal sentiment, or one harsh expression concerning any persons who differed from him, not even of the individuals who were so much in the practice of abusing him and traducing his character."

"My acquaintance with Dr. Priestley," says Mr. Taylor, in a letter recently received, "commenced early in 1797 ; it soon became intimate, and, during his subsequent visits to Philadelphia, in 1801 and 1803, I enjoyed much of his company. He was easy of access, and his conversation was peculiarly attractive. He was neither reserved nor talkative. Although his stores of knowledge were uncommonly great, he made no display of his attainments ; yet, when called on, he was never unwilling to contribute his share to the entertainment or instruction of those with whom he was associated. He exacted neither homage nor deference ; it seemed as if he was utterly unconscious of having risen far above the common level. The expression of his countenance was that of sedateness and benignity, and

the eulogy of a friend, or the censures of an enemy, or even the delineation of an impartial witness. We know him only from our own observation. It is the object of these pages to present the subject of them to the observation of men. Here he may be fairly seen. No man is more exactly discerned in his writings than Dr. Priestley. As one of his respectful and admiring opponents, Toplady, said of him, "He is like a piece of crystal, which one can take up in his hand and look through." His works show him as he is, without disguise. And as our object is not to eulogize indiscriminately an imperfect man any more than to join an indiscriminate outcry against him; but simply to do an act of common justice by putting in a fair light the virtues of his extraordinary life; we are satisfied that the method here pursued is the most faithful, as it certainly must be the most interesting.

VIEWS  
OF  
CHRISTIAN TRUTH, PIETY, AND  
MORALITY.

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THE DUTY OF NOT LIVING TO OURSELVES.

A SERMON.

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ROMANS, xiv. 7.

For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

It is the excellence of our rational nature, that by it we are capable of living to some known end, and of governing our lives and conduct by some rule; whereas brute creatures necessarily live and act at random, just as the present appetite influences them. Let us, then, my brethren, make the most of this our prerogative, by proposing to ourselves the noblest end of human life, and engaging in such a course of actions as will reflect the greatest honor upon our nature, and be productive of the most solid and lasting happiness, both in the performance and the review of them.

Agreeably to this, let the principal use we make of our understanding be, to discover what the great end of life is;

and then let us use the resolution and fortitude that is either natural to us, or acquired by us, in steadily conforming ourselves to it.

But, as the regular investigation of the rule of life from the light of nature only, may be tedious, and perhaps at last unsatisfactory; let us, without waiting for the result of such an inquiry upon the principles of reason, take a more clear and sure guide, the Holy Scriptures, in so important a subject, and see afterwards whether reason and experience will not give their sanction to that decision.

The great end of human life is negatively expressed by the apostle Paul in my text, "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself;" and if we attend to the connexion of these words, we shall find what, in the apostle's idea, is the true end to which men ought to live.

The apostle is here treating of a controversy which had arisen in the Christian church, about the lawfulness of eating meat sacrificed to idols, and keeping holy certain days, together with some other ceremonious observances, and exhorting both parties to do nothing that might give offence, or be a snare to the other, lest, by their means, any one should perish for whom Christ died.

As the best foundation for mutual tenderness and charity, he reminds them that both parties acted, with regard to all ritual observances, as they imagined was the will of Christ. "He that observeth a day, observeth it to the Lord; and he that observeth not a day, to the Lord he observeth it not." And after giving his sanction in the fullest manner to this maxim, and deciding, with respect to this particular case, that all Christians ought to act according to the will of Christ, and consult the good and the peace of their fellow-Christians; he declares in general, that "no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; but whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord;" that is, in all our actions, our views should not be directed to ourselves, but to the interest of our holy religion.



And as the Christian religion has for its object the happiness of mankind, (since Christ came to bless us in turning us away from our iniquities,) it is the same thing as if he had said, The great scope of all our conduct should be the real welfare of all to whom our influence can extend.

We should, therefore, my brethren, according to this apostolical maxim, by no means confine our regards to ourselves, and have our own pleasure, profit, or advantage in view in every thing we undertake ; but look out of, and beyond ourselves, and take a generous concern in the happiness of all our brethren of mankind ; make their sorrows our sorrows, their joys our joys, and their happiness our pursuit : and it is in this disinterested conduct, and in this only, that we shall find our own true happiness.

That this is the true rule of human life, will appear, whether we consider the course of nature without us, the situation of mankind in this world, or take a nearer view of the principles of human nature. And we shall likewise find that several considerations, drawn from the Holy Scriptures, will farther confirm and illustrate this maxim of human conduct, which was first suggested by them.

1. This disinterested conduct of man is most agreeable to the course of nature without us. There is no part of the creation but, if it be viewed attentively, will expose the selfishness and narrow-mindedness of men : for among all that infinite variety of things and creatures which present themselves to our view, not one of them appears to have been made merely for itself, but every thing bears a relation to something else. They can hardly be said to afford any matter for contemplation singly, and are most of all the objects of our admiration when considered as connected with other things. The primary uses of things are few, but the secondary uses of every thing are almost infinite. Indeed, the secondary uses of things are so many that we are lost in the multiplicity of them ; whereas we can give no answer, if we be asked what is the primary use of any thing, but this general one,

which will equally suit every thing, — that every creature which is capable of happiness, was made to enjoy that share of it which is suited to its nature.

Now what do we mean when we say that the several parts of nature are adapted to one another, but that they are made for the use of one another? I shall mention only a few of these mutual relations and uses; beginning with those parts of nature which are the most remote from one another, and whose mutual relations and uses are the least obvious, and so proceed to those in which they are more obvious. The sun, the moon, the planets, and comets, are strictly connected, and combined into one system. Each body, though so exceedingly remote from the rest, is admirably adapted, by its situation, magnitude, and velocity in its orbit, to the state of the whole, in those respects and many others. This connexion, probably, also extends to the remotest bodies in the universe; so that it is impossible to say that the withdrawing of any one would not, in some respect or other, affect all the rest.

The clouds and the rain are designed to moisten the earth, and the sun to warm it; and the texture and juices of the earth are formed so as to receive the genial influences of both, in order to ripen and bring to perfection that infinite variety of plants and fruits, the seeds of which are deposited in it. Again, is not each plant peculiarly adapted to its proper soil and climate, so that every country is furnished with those productions which are peculiarly suited to it? Are not all plants likewise suited to the various kinds of animals which feed upon them? So that, though they enjoy a kind of life peculiar to themselves, and all the influences they are exposed to are adapted to promote that life, they themselves are as much adapted to maintain that higher kind of life which is enjoyed by creatures of the animal nature.

The various kinds of animals are, again, in a thousand ways adapted to, and formed for the use of, one another. Beasts of a fiercer nature prey upon the tamer cattle: fishes of a larger size live almost wholly upon those of a less: and

there are some birds which prey upon land animals, others upon fishes, and others upon creatures of their own species.

That brute animals are excellently adapted to the use of man, and were, therefore, made to be subservient to the use of man, man will not deny. The strength of some, and the sagacity of others, are as much at our command, and are as effectually employed for our use, as if they belonged to ourselves. We can even turn to our advantage every passion of their nature, so that we can safely repose the greatest confidence in many of them. They are the guardians of our possessions and of our lives. They even enter into our resentments, and, at our instigation, take part in our revenge.

Having now advanced to man, the chief of this lower creation, and shown that all creatures of the vegetable and merely animal nature, live and die for his use, pride might bid us here break off the chain of mutual relations and uses, which we have been pursuing thus far, and leave man in the enjoyment of his superiority; but, — beside that it is contrary to the analogy of nature, in which we see nothing but what has innumerable secondary relations and uses, that man only should be made for himself; —

2. The situation of man in this world, or the external circumstances of human nature, still oblige us to assert with Paul, that “no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.” Man himself is but a link, though the highest link of this great chain, all the parts of which are closely connected by the hand of our divine Author. Nay, the more various and extensive are our powers, either for action or enjoyment, on that very account, the more multiplied and extensive are our wants; so that, at the same time that they are marks of our superiority to, they are bonds of our connexion with, and signs of our dependence upon, the various parts of the world around us, and of our subservience to one another.

In fact, every time that we gratify any of our senses, though it be in consequence of the exertion of our own powers, we are reminded (if we will be so just to ourselves as to take

the hint) of our dependence upon something without us ; for the means of our gratification are, in all cases, evidently without ourselves.

If we be served by the vegetables and the animals which this earth affords, we are obliged, in our turn, to favor their propagation, to promote their cultivation, and to preserve them in a healthy and vigorous state ; and employment of this kind doth, in fact, take up a great part of our attention and labor. We must make the creature in some measure happy, if we would be effectually served by it. And the attention which domestic animals give to us, and their anxiety for us, is not to be compared to the attention we bestow on them, and the anxiety we undergo on their account.

But my subject leads me to attend to the connexion which man has with man, rather than with the inferior part of the creation, though it seemed not improper to point out that. In general, nothing can be more obvious than the mutual dependence of men on one another. We see it in the most barbarous countries, where the connexions of mankind are the fewest and the slightest. This dependence is more sensible, indeed, in a state of infancy, when the least remission of the care of others would be fatal to us ; but it is as real and necessary, and even vastly more extensive, though less striking, when we are more advanced in life, especially in civilized countries. And the more perfect is the state of civil society, the more various and extended are the connexions which man has with man, and the less able is he to subsist comfortably without the help of others.

The business of human life, where it is enjoyed in perfection, is subdivided into so many parts, (each of which is executed by different hands,) that a person who would reap the benefit of all the arts of life in perfection, must employ, and consequently be dependent upon, thousands ; he must even be under obligations to numbers of whom he has not the least knowledge.

These connexions of man with man are every day growing

more extensive. The most distant parts of the earth are now connected : every part is every day growing still more necessary to every other part ; and the nearer advances we make to general happiness, and the more commodious our circumstances in this world are made for us, the more intimately and extensively we become connected with, and the more closely we are dependent upon, one another.

By thus tracing the progress of man to that state of happiness which he now enjoys, we may be led to think that, in pursuing it still farther, to a more happy state of being, adapted to our social natures, we shall find ourselves still more variously and intimately connected with, and more closely dependent upon one another ; which affords a far nobler and more pleasing prospect to a person of an enlarged mind and of a social and benevolent disposition, than he could have from supposing that, after death, all our mutual connexions will be broken, and that every good man will be made transcendently happy within himself, having no intercourse, or at least necessary intercourse, with any being besides his Maker.

By these arguments, which are drawn from facts that are obvious to every person who attends to the external circumstances of mankind, it is plain that no man can live of himself ; and even that the rich are, in fact, more dependent upon others than the poor ; for, having more wants, they have occasion for more and more frequent supplies. Now it will easily be allowed, that every reason why we cannot live *of* ourselves, is an argument why we ought not to live *to* ourselves : for certainly no one receives an obligation, but he ought to confer one. Every connexion must, in some measure, be mutual. And, indeed, the circulation of good offices would in a great measure cease, if the passage were not as open and as free from obstruction, in one part of the common channel as another. The rich, if they would receive the greatest advantages from society, must contribute to the happiness of it. If they act upon different maxims, and think to



avail themselves of the pleasures of society without promoting the good of it, they will never know the true pleasures of society. And, in the end, they will be found to have enjoyed the least themselves, who have least contributed to the enjoyment of others.

Thus it appears, from a view of the external circumstances of mankind, that man was not made to live to himself. The same truth may be inferred,

3. From a nearer inspection of the principles of human nature, and the springs of human actions.

If any man look into himself, and consider the springs and motives of his own actions, he will find that there are principles in his nature which would be of no use, were the intercourse he has with his fellow-creatures cut off; for that, both the efficient and the final causes of their operations are without himself. They are views of mankind and their situations, which call those principles into action; and if we trace the operation of them, we shall clearly see that, though they be strictly connected with private happiness, their ultimate and proper object is the happiness of society.

What other account can we give of that impulse which we all, more or less, feel for society? And whence is that restless and painful dissatisfaction which a man feels when he is long excluded from it, but that, in such a solitary condition, his faculties have not their proper exercise, and he is, as it were, out of his proper element?

Whence is that quick sensibility which we are conscious of, with respect to both the joys and the sorrows of our fellow-creatures, if their happiness or misery were a matter of indifference to us? Can we feel what is sometimes called the contagion of the passions, when we find that our minds contract a kind of gloom and heaviness in the company of the melancholy, and that this melancholy vanishes in company which is innocently cheerful, and question the influence of social connexions? Much less can the reality or the power of the social principle be doubted when a fellow-



creature in distress calls forth the most exquisite feelings of compassion, attended with instant and strong efforts towards his relief.

So essential a part of our nature are these social passions, that it is impossible for any man wholly to escape the influence of them; but if we would be witness of their strongest effects, and see them branched out into that beautiful subordination which corresponds to all the varieties of our mutual relations, we must look into domestic life. There we shall clearly see that the most frequent and almost the only causes of man's joys and sorrows are the joys and sorrows of others, and that the immediate aim of all his actions is the well-being and happiness of others.

Doth not the sense of honor in the human breast derive all its force from the influence which social connexions have over us? Of what use could it be, but to beings formed for society? What do we infer from our dread of infamy, and from our being so strongly actuated by a passion for fame, and also from the universality and extent of this principle, but that our nature obliges us to keep up a regard to others in our whole conduct, and that the Author of nature intended we should? And is it not a farther evidence of the ultimate design of this principle, that, in general, the means of being distinguished, at least of gaining a solid and lasting reputation among men, is to be useful to mankind; public utility being the most direct road to true fame?

Every noble and exalted faculty of our nature is either directly of a social nature, or tends to strengthen the social principle. Nothing can be more evident than that the dictates of conscience strongly enforce the practice of benevolence; and the pleasures of benovolence certainly constitute the greatest part of those pleasures which we refer to the moral sense. They must necessarily do so, while the foundation of all virtue and right conduct is the happiness of society; for then every reflection that we have done our duty, must be the same thing as a reflection that we have contributed what was in our power to the good of our fellow-creatures.

Lastly, of what doth devotion itself consist, but the exercise of the social affections? What are the dispositions of our minds which are called forth into action in private or public prayer, but reverence for true greatness, humility, gratitude, love, and confidence in God, as the greatest and best of beings; qualities of the most admirable use and effect in social life.

I may add, that not only are the highest and the worthiest principles of human conduct either truly social, or a reinforcement of the social principle, but even the lowest appetites and passions of our nature are far from being indifferent to social connexions, considerations, and influences. That the pleasures we receive from the fine arts, as those of music, poetry, and painting, and the like, are enjoyed but very imperfectly except in company, is very evident to all persons who have the least taste for those pleasures. I may even venture to say, that there is hardly a voluptuary, the most devoted to the pleasures of the table, but indulges himself with more satisfaction in company than alone.

Having given this general view of the social turn of our whole natures, whereby we are continually led out of ourselves in our pursuit of happiness; I shall now consider farther, how all our appetites and passions, which are the springs of all our actions, do, in their own nature, tend to lead us out of ourselves, and how much our happiness depends upon our keeping their proper objects in view, and upon our minds being thereby constantly engaged upon something foreign to themselves; after which I shall show what are the fittest objects thus to engage our attention.

In order to preserve mutual connexion, dependence, and harmony among all his works, it has pleased our Divine Author to appoint, that all our appetites and desires, to whatever sense, external or internal, they be referred, should point to something beyond ourselves for their gratification; so that the idea of *self* is not in the least necessary to a state of the highest enjoyment.

When may men be said to be happy, but when their faculties are properly exercised in the pursuit of those things which give them pleasure? I say the pursuit rather than the enjoyment, not because enjoyment makes no part of our happiness, but because the vigorous and agreeable sensations with which our minds are impressed during the pursuit of a favorite object are generally, at least in this life, of vastly more consideration. The pleasure we receive the instant we arrive at the height of our wishes may be more exquisite, but the others are of much longer continuance; and, immediately upon the gratification of any of our desires, the mind is instantly reaching after some new object.

Supposing now the mind of any person to be fully and constantly engaged in the pursuit of a proper object, to the possession of which he is sensible he every day makes near approaches, and his desires be not so eager as to make him uneasy during the pursuit; what more is requisite to make him as happy as his nature can bear? He will not be the less happy because the object he is in pursuit of is foreign to himself; nor would it make him any happier to have the idea of its contributing to his happiness. Nay, it may be shown, that it were better for us in general, with respect to real enjoyment, never to have the idea of the relation which the objects of our pursuit bear to ourselves; and this is most of all evident with respect to the higher pleasures of our nature, from which we derive our greatest happiness.

Our benevolence, for instance, leads us immediately to relieve and oblige others. Pleasure, indeed, always attends generous actions, and is consequent upon them; but the satisfaction we receive in our minds from having done kind offices to others, is far less pure, and less perfectly enjoyed, if at all, when we had this, or any other private gratification, in view before the action.

In like manner, he who courts applause, and does worthy actions solely with a view to obtain it, can have no knowledge of the genuine pleasure arising either from the good action

itself, or the applause that is given to it ; because he is sensible, in his own mind, that if those persons who praise his conduct were acquainted with the real motive of it, and knew that he meant nothing more, by his pretended acts of piety and benevolence, than to gain their applause, they would be so far from admiring and commending, that they would despise him for it.

It is evident, for the same reason, that no person can enjoy the applause of his own mind on account of any action which he did with a view to gain it. The pleasures of a good conscience, or, as they are sometimes called, those of the moral sense, can not be enjoyed but by a person who steadily obeys the dictates of his conscience, and uniformly acts the part which he thinks to be right, without any view to the pleasure and self-satisfaction which may arise from it.

The idea of self, as it is not adapted to gratify any of our appetites and can contribute nothing towards their gratification, can only occasion anxiety, fear, and distrust about our happiness, when it is frequently the subject of our thoughts. The apprehension and dread of misery (which is certainly the occasion of most of the real trouble and misery of man in this life) is beyond measure increased from this source ; and the effects of it are most sensibly felt both in the lesser and greater scenes of our lives.

It is chiefly an anxious solicitude about ourselves, and the appearance we shall make in the eyes of others, which is the cause of that affectation and constraint in behaviour which is so troublesome to a person's self, and so ridiculous in the eyes of others. This trifling remark, being so frequently verified, may serve to show that these sentiments are by no means merely speculative ; but that they enter into the daily scenes of active life. Indeed they are in the highest sense practical, and upon them depend those maxims of conduct which contain the great secret of human happiness, and which are confirmed by every day's experience.

That the idea of self, frequently occurring to our minds in

our pursuit of happiness, is often a real and great obstruction to it, will be more obvious from a short series of plain facts and examples, which I shall therefore mention.

Why are brute creatures, in general, so contented and happy in their low sphere of life, and much more so than the mind of man could be in their situation? Is it not because their views are perpetually fixed upon some object within their reach, adapted to their desires; and that the abstract idea of self, together with the notion of their being in the pursuit of happiness, and liable to be disappointed in that pursuit, never comes in their way to interrupt the uniform and pleasurable exertion of their faculties in the pursuit of their proper objects?

The days of our infancy are happy for the same reason, notwithstanding the imperfection of our faculties, and the greater proportion of pains and disorders we are then liable to. Those years of our lives slide away in unmixed enjoyment, except when they are interrupted by the actual sensations of pain; for we are then incapable of suffering any thing from the fear of evil. It is not till after a considerable time that we get the abstract idea of self; an idea which the brutes, probably, never arrive at, and which is of excellent use to us, as will be shown in its proper place, in our pursuit of happiness; but is often abused to the great increase of our misery, as will appear by the facts we are now considering.

Why are persons, whose situation in life obliges them to constant labor either of body or mind, generally more happy than those whose circumstances do not lay them under a necessity to labor, and whose own inclination does not lead them to it; but because the former have their thoughts constantly employed in the pursuit of some end, which keeps their faculties awake and fully exerted? And this is always attended with a state of vigorous, and consequently pleasurable, sensations. Persons thus employed have not much leisure to attend to the idea of self, and that anxiety which always attends the frequent recurring of it; whereas, a per-



son who has no object foreign to himself, which constantly and necessarily engages his attention, cannot have his faculties fully exerted ; and therefore his mind cannot possibly be in that state of vigorous sensation in which happiness consists.

The mind of such a person, having nothing without him sufficient to engage its attention, turns upon itself. He feels he is not happy, but he sees not the reason of it. This again excites his wonder, vexation, and perplexity. He tries new expedients : but as these are only temporary, and generally whimsical choices, none of them have sufficient power to fix and confine his attention. He is still perpetually thinking about himself, and wondering and uneasy that he is not happy. This anxious, perplexed state of mind, affecting the nervous system, necessarily occasions a more irritable state of the nerves and of the brain, which makes the unhappy person subject to more frequent alarms, to greater anxiety and distress, than before ; till, these mental and bodily disorders mutually increasing one another, his condition is at length the most wretched and distressing that can be conceived. No bodily pain, no rack, no torture, can equal the misery and distress of a human being whose mind is thus a prey to itself. No wonder that, in this situation, many persons wish the utter extinction of their being, and often put a period to their lives.

This is certainly the most deplorable situation to which a human being can be reduced in this world, and is doubly the object of our compassion, when the disorder has its seat originally in the body, in such a manner as that no endeavours to engage a man's thoughts upon other objects can force his attention from himself.

It is no wonder that we see more of this kind of unhappiness in the higher ranks of life, and among persons who are in what is called easy circumstances, than in any other. Indeed, the case is hardly possible in any other than in easy circumstances ; for, did a man's circumstances really find constant employment for his thoughts, were his business so urgent as to leave him no leisure for suspense and uncer-

tainty what to do, it is plain, from the preceding principles, that such anxiety and distress could not take place. It is well known that the mind suffers more in a state of uncertainty and suspense, for want of some motive to determine a man's choice, than he can suffer in the vigorous prosecution of the most arduous undertaking. I appeal to men of leisure, and particularly to persons who are naturally of an active and enterprising disposition, for the truth of this fact.

These principles likewise, as is evident without entering into a detail of particulars, furnish us with a good reason why we generally see fathers and mothers of large families infinitely more easy, cheerful, and happy than those persons who have no family connexions. The greater affluence, ease, and variety of pleasures which these can command, (subject to the inconveniences I have mentioned, and which are commonly visible enough in the case I refer to,) are a poor equivalent for the necessary, constant, and vigorous exertion of their faculties, and, consequently, the strong sensations and lively enjoyments which a variety of family cares, conjugal and parental tenderness, supply for the others.

This would be the case universally, where large families could subsist, if the parents had sufficient employment, and if an early-acquired taste for superfluities had not taken too deep root in their minds.

Happy is it for the world, and a great mark of the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence, that men's minds are so constituted, that though they be in easy circumstances, they are never completely satisfied. The passions of most men are still engaging them in a variety of pursuits, in which they are as eager, and which they prosecute with as much alacrity and earnestness, as if necessity compelled them to it; otherwise, every person who could live easy would be inevitably miserable.

Infinitely happier would it be for themselves, and for the world, if all their pursuits were such as would give them satisfaction upon the reflection as well as in the pursuit, and

be of real advantage to the rest of mankind ; which two circumstances never fail to coincide. However, with regard to a person's self in this life, any end is unspeakably better than no end at all ; and such is the wise appointment of Providence, that bad ends tend in a variety of ways to check and defeat themselves, and to throw the minds of men into better, nobler, and more satisfactory pursuits ; a consideration which cannot fail to suggest, to a benevolent and pious mind, a prospect of a future happy and glorious state of things.

It may be said, that if happiness consist in or depend upon the exertion of our faculties upon some object foreign to ourselves, it is a matter of indifference what the object be. I answer, that during the pursuit it is nearly so, and universal experience, I imagine, will justify the observation. This is the reason why we see men equally eager, and equally happy in the pursuit of a variety of things which appear trifling to one another. Thus the florist, the medalist, the critic, the antiquary, and every adept in the minuter branches of science, all enjoy equal happiness in the pursuit of their several objects ; and as much as the historian, the astronomer, the moralist, or the divine, who refers his nobler studies to no higher end, and to whom they only serve as an exercise of his faculties.

But though an eager pursuit tends to keep the mind in a state of vigorous and lively sensation, that pursuit only can give us the maximum, the highest possible degree of happiness, which has the following characters : It must be attended with the probability of success, consequently it must be generally successful ; and it must also terminate in such gratifications as are least inconsistent with themselves, or with the other gratifications of which our nature makes us capable. And it may be demonstrated (though I shall not undertake to do it particularly in this place) that no pursuits answer to this description but those in which the love of mankind, the love of God, or the dictates of conscience, engage us.

For in all other pursuits, such as those of sensual pleasure, the pleasures of imagination and ambition, we are liable to frequent disappointments; the gratifications in which they terminate are inconsistent with themselves, and with each other; and they almost entirely deaden and disqualify the mind for the nobler pleasures of our nature. It is the love of God, the love of mankind, and a sense of duty, which engage the minds of men in the noblest of all pursuits. By these we are carried on with increasing alacrity and satisfaction. Even the pains and distresses in which we involve ourselves by these courses are preferable to the pleasures attending the gratification of our lower appetites.

Besides, these noble pursuits, generally at least, allow us even more of the lower gratifications of our nature than can be obtained by a direct pursuit of them; for a little experience will inform us, that we receive the most pleasure from these lower appetites of our nature, as well as from the highest sources of pleasure we are capable of, when we have their gratification least of all in view. There can be no doubt, for instance, but that the laborer who eats and drinks merely to satisfy the calls of hunger and thirst, has vastly more pleasure in eating and drinking, than the epicure who studies the pleasing of his palate.

They are the pleasures of benevolence and piety which most effectually carry us out of ourselves; whereas every other inferior pursuit suggests to us, in a thousand respects, the idea of *self*, the unseasonable intervention of which may be called the worm which lies at the root of all human bliss. And never can we be completely happy till we "love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and our neighbour as ourselves."

This is the Christian self-annihilation, and a state of the most complete happiness to which our natures can attain: when, without having the least idea of being in the pursuit of our own happiness, our faculties are wholly absorbed in those noble and exalted pursuits in which we are sure not

to be finally disappointed, and in the course of which we enjoy all the consistent pleasures of our whole nature. When rejoicing with all that rejoice, weeping with all that weep, and intimately associating the idea of God, the Maker of all things, our father and our friend, with all the works of his hands, and all the dispensations of his providence, we constantly triumph in the comfortable sense of the Divine presence and approbation, and in the transporting prospect of advancing every day nearer to the accomplishment of his glorious purposes for the happiness of his creatures.

If this be the proper and supreme happiness of man, it may be asked of what use is the principle of self-interest? I answer, that though an attention to it be inconsistent with pure, unmixed happiness, yet a moderate attention to it is of excellent use in our progress towards it. It serves as a scaffold to a noble and glorious edifice, though it be unworthy of standing as any part of it. It is of more particular use to check and restrain the indulgence of our lower appetites and passions, before other objects and motives have acquired a sufficient power over us. But though we ought, therefore, to exhort those persons who are immersed in sensuality and gross vices, to abandon those indulgencies out of a regard to their true interest, it is advisable to withdraw this motive by degrees. However, as we shall never arrive at absolute perfection, we necessarily must, and indeed ought to be influenced by it, more or less, through the whole course of our existence, only less and less perpetually.

The principle of self-interest may be regarded as a medium between the lower and the higher principles of our nature, and, therefore, of principal use in our transition, as we may call it, from an imperfect to a more perfect state.

Perhaps the following view of this subject may be the easiest to us: A regard to our greatest happiness must necessarily govern our conduct with respect to all those virtues which are termed *private* virtues, as temperance, chastity, and every branch of self-government; but it always does



harm as a motive to the *social* virtues. When, therefore, self-government, which is our first step towards happiness, is established, we ought to endeavour to excite men to action by higher and nobler motives; for, with regard to all those virtues, the ultimate object of which is not private happiness, an attention to self-interest is of manifest prejudice to us, and this through the whole course of our lives, imperfect as we are, and as much occasion as we have for every effectual motive to virtue.

We are now come, in the last place, to see what considerations, drawn from the Holy Scriptures, will farther confirm and illustrate this maxim of human conduct, which was first suggested by them.

That the Scriptures join the voice of all nature around us, informing man that he is not made for himself; that they inculcate the same lesson which we learn both from a view of the external circumstances of mankind, and also from a nearer inspection of the principles of human nature; will be evident, whether we consider the object of the religion they exhibit, (that is, the temper to which we are intended to be formed by it,) or the motives by which it is enforced and recommended to us in them.

That the end and design of our holy religion, Christians, was to form us to the most disinterested benevolence, cannot be doubted by any person who consults the Holy Scriptures, and especially the books of the New Testament.

There we plainly see the principle of benevolence represented, when it is in its due strength and degree, as equal in point of intenseness to that of self-love. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The plain consequence of this is, that if all our brethren of mankind with whom we are connected, have an equal claim upon us, (since our connexions are daily growing more extensive, and we ourselves are, consequently, growing daily of less relative importance in our own eyes,) the principle of benevolence must, in the end, absolutely swallow up that of self-love.

The most exalted devotion, as even superior both to self-love and benevolence, is always every where recommended to us: and the sentiments of devotion have been shown greatly to aid, and, in fact, to be the same with those of benevolence; and they must be so, unless it can be shown that we have some senses, powers, or faculties, which respect the Deity only.

In order to determine men to engage in a course of disinterested and generous actions, every motive which is calculated to work upon human nature is employed. And as mankind in general are deeply immersed in vice and folly, their hopes, but more especially their fears, are acted upon in the strongest manner by the prospect of rewards and punishments. Even temporal rewards and punishments were proposed to mankind in the earlier and ruder ages of the world. But as our notions of happiness grow more enlarged, infinitely greater, but indefinite objects of hope and fear are set before us. Something unknown, but something unspeakably dreadful in a future world is perpetually held up to us, as a guard against the allurements to vice and excess which the world abounds with; and still farther to counteract their baleful influences, the heavenly world (the habitation of good men after death) is represented to us as a place in which we shall be completely happy, enjoying something which is described as more than eye hath seen, ear heard, or than the heart of man can conceive.

These motives are certainly addressed to the principle of self-interest, urging us out of a regard to ourselves and our general happiness, "to cease to do evil, and learn to do well." And, indeed, no motives of a more generous nature, and drawn from more distant considerations, can be supposed sufficient to influence the bulk of mankind, and "bring them from the power of sin and Satan unto God."

But when, by the influence of these motives, it may be supposed that mankind are in some measure recovered from the grosser pollutions of the world, and the principle of self-interest has been played, as it were, against itself, and been

a means of engaging us in a course and habit of actions which are necessarily connected with, and productive of, more generous and noble principles, then these nobler principles are those which the sacred writers chiefly inculcate.

Nothing is more frequent with the sacred writers than to exhort men to the practice of their duty as the command of God, from a principle of love to God, of love to Christ, and of love to mankind, more especially of our fellow-Christians, and from a regard to the interest of our holy religion: motives which do not at all turn the attention of our minds upon themselves. This is not borrowing the aid of self-love to strengthen the principles of benevolence and piety, but it is properly deriving additional strength to these noble dispositions, as it were, from within themselves, independent of foreign considerations.

We may safely say, that no degree or kind of self-love is made use of in the Scriptures but what is necessary to raise us above that principle. And some of the more refined kinds of self-love, how familiar soever they may be in some systems of morals, never come in sight there. We are never exhorted in the Scriptures to do benevolent actions for the sake of the reflex pleasures of benevolence, or pious actions with a view to the pleasures of devotion. This refined kind of self-love is nowhere to be found in the Scriptures.

Even the pleasures of a good conscience, — though they be of a more general nature, and there be less refinement in them than in some other pleasures which are connected with the idea of self, and though they be represented in the Scriptures as the consequence of good actions, and a source of joy, as a testimony of a person's being in the favor of God, and in the way to happiness, — are perhaps never directly proposed to us as the reward of virtue. This motive to virtue makes a greater figure in the system of the later Stoics (those heathen philosophers who, in consequence of entertaining the most extravagant idea of their own merit, really idolized their own natures to a degree absolutely

blasphemous) than in the Scriptures. And if we consider the nature of this principle, we shall soon be sensible that if it be inculcated as a motive to virtue, and particularly the virtues of a sublimer kind, it should be with great caution, and in such a manner as shall have the least tendency to encourage self-applause; for does not self-applause border very nearly upon pride and self-conceit, and that species of it which is called spiritual pride, and which is certainly a most malignant disposition?

If this same principle have power to excite such ridiculous vanity, intolerable arrogance, inveterate rancour, and supercilious contempt of others, when it has nothing but the trifling advantage of skill in criticism, a talent for poetry, a taste for belles lettres, or some other of the minuter parts of science to avail itself of; what have we not to dread from it, when it can boast of what is universally acknowledged to be a far superior kind of excellence?

To guard against this dangerous rock, so fatal to every genuine principle of virtue, the utmost humility, self-diffidence, and trust in God, are ever recommended to us in the Holy Scriptures. Good men are taught to regard him as the giver of every good and every perfect gift. They are represented as disclaiming all the merit of their own good works, and expecting all favor and happiness, private or public, from the free goodness and undeserved mercy of God. When we have done all that is commanded us, we must say we are unprofitable servants; we have done only that which it was our duty to do.

In the representation which our Saviour has given us of the proceedings of the last great day of judgment, it is in this respect that the temper of the righteous is contrasted with that of the wicked; though that was not the principal design of the representation. The righteous seem surprised at the favorable opinion which their Judge expresses of them, and absolutely disclaim all the good works which he ascribes to them. "When saw we thee," say they, "an hungered,

and fed thee ; or thirsty, and gave thee drink ; when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in, or naked, and clothed thee ; or when saw we thee sick and in prison, and came unto thee ? ” Whereas the wicked are represented as equally surprised at the censure our Lord passes upon them, and insist upon their innocence, saying, “ When saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee ? ”

This, too, is the excellent moral conveyed to us in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, and the import of one of the blessings which our Lord pronounced in a solemn manner at the beginning of his ministry on earth, “ Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven ; ” and also the spirit of many of our Lord’s invectives against the pride and hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees.

No other vice seems capable of disturbing the equal and generous temper of our Lord. Other vices rather excite his compassion ; but pride, together with its usual attendant, hypocrisy, never fails to rouse his most vehement indignation : insomuch, that before we attend to the heinous nature and dreadful consequences of those vices, we are apt rather to blame our Lord for intemperate wrath upon these occasions, and to wonder why a person, who otherwise appears to be so meek, should, in this case only, be so highly provoked.

How severely doth he check the least tendency towards pride and ambition in his own disciples, whenever he discovers in any of them a disposition to aspire to distinction and superiority ; closing his admonition, on one remarkable occasion, with these words, which are characteristic of the temper of his religion : “ He that is greatest among you shall be your servant. Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.”

What temper can be supposed more proper to qualify us for joining the glorious assembly of the spirits of just men made perfect, and perhaps innumerable orders of beings far superior to us, both in understanding and goodness, when



all the splendor of the invisible world shall be thrown open to us, but a spirit of the deepest humility, and the purest benevolence? This alone can dispose us truly to rejoice in the view of every kind and degree of excellence, wherever found, without the least uneasiness arising from pride, envy, jealousy, or dislike; all which vicious qualities of the mind are nearly connected together. And how can a spirit of true humility and pure benevolence, which cannot exist without humility, be attained, if our regards be perpetually, or frequently, directed to ourselves? Where self is considered, pride, vanity, or self-conceit, with all their hateful consequences, seem, in some degree, to be unavoidable.

Whoever, therefore, lays the foundation of human virtue on the principle of self-interest, or, what is nearly the same thing, self-applause, is erecting a fabric which can never rest on such supports; and he will be found, in fact, to have been pulling down with one hand what he was endeavouring to build up with the other.

To draw to a conclusion. This doctrine abounds with the noblest practical uses, and points out directly the great rule of life and source of happiness; which is to give ourselves wholly up to some employment, which may, if possible, engage all our faculties, and which tends to the good of society. This is a field which is open to the exertion of all human powers, and in which all mankind may be equally, mutually, and boundlessly happy.

This will render all expedients to kill time, unnecessary. With our affections and our faculties thus engrossed by a worthy object, we scarce need fear being ever dull, pensive, or melancholy, or know what it is to have our time hang heavy upon our hands. And I think I may so far presume upon the known connexion of mind and body, as to say that this is the best preservative against hypochondriacal disorders, to which persons whose situation in the world doth not lead them into the active scenes of life, are peculiarly subject. Every day passed in the steady and earnest discharge of a

man's known duty, will pass with uniform cheerfulness and alacrity. And in the glorious, animating prospect of a future happy state of mankind, on which, in a humble trust and confidence in the assistance and grace of God, he has spent all his cares and exerted all his powers, that joy will spring up in his heart here, which will hereafter be "unspeakable and full of glory."

If troubles and persecutions arise on account of our adhering to our duty; if we be opposed in the prosecution of laudable undertakings, or suffer in consequence of undertaking them; the true piety of a person who habitually lives to God, and not to himself, is capable of converting them all into pure, unmixed joy and transport. Then the human mind, roused to the most intense exertion of all its faculties, burdened with no consciousness of guilt, referring itself absolutely to the disposal of its God and Father, distrusting its own powers, and confiding in the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of God, — acquires a fervor of spirit, a courage, fortitude, and magnanimity, tempered with the most perfect serenity, and the greatest presence of mind, that is sufficient, and more than sufficient, to bear a man through every difficulty, and even to convert all pain into pleasure. His highly agitated state of mind, in those trying circumstances, is almost pure rapture and ecstasy.

In those circumstances, which appear so distressing, numbers, I doubt not, have been able, according to our blessed Saviour's direction, to "rejoice and be exceeding glad, knowing that their reward was great in heaven"; and have experienced more real comfort, peace of mind, and inward joy, in the greatest adversity, than they had ever felt in the days of their prosperity. Yea, what is related by historians of some Christian and Protestant martyrs appears to me not incredible; namely, that in the midst of flames they have felt no pain. Their minds were so intensely agitated, and so wholly occupied with opposite sensations of the most exalted nature, as to exclude all external sensation whatever, vastly more

than we can form any idea of from the trances and reveries which any person was ever subject to.

What the extraordinary exercises of devotion are able to do upon extraordinary occasions, the habitual, moderate exercise of piety, will be able to do in the ordinary course and the common troubles of our lives; so that it may not only be compared to a strong cordial, to be applied when the mind is ready to faint under adversity, but to that food which is the daily support of our lives.

To have God *always* in our thoughts is not possible in this world. Present objects, to the influence of which we are continually exposed, must necessarily engage a great part of our attention; and worldly objects, by continually engrossing our thoughts, are apt to become of too great importance to us. We grow anxious about them, and our minds are harassed and fatigued with a constant and close attention to them. Now it is when the mind is in this state, or rather tending towards it, that the benign influences of devotion are, in the ordinary course of our lives, the most sensibly felt; when the mind, looking off, and above all worldly objects, and deeply impressed with a sense of the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of God, unburdens itself of every anxiety, and casts all its cares upon its heavenly Father; and when the preceding tumult and disorder in the passions, only serve to augment that unspeakable joy, satisfaction, and confidence, with which a deep sense of the presence and providence of God inspires the soul.

The relief a benevolent mind feels from communicating its troubles and cares to an intimate friend, in whose wisdom and integrity he can confide, though of the same nature, is but a faint image of what the truly pious soul feels in the delightful seasons of the devout intercourse which he maintains with his God.

This is a perpetual source of joy and satisfaction to a truly devout mind, which the wicked, those persons who live to themselves and not to mankind or to God, intermeddle not

with. Not even an idea of that sweet tranquillity, exalted joy, and calm fortitude which true devotion inspires, can be communicated to another who hath had no experience of it himself. This is truly of those things which St. Paul says "the natural man" cannot comprehend, and that "they are foolishness to him, because they are spiritually discerned."

I would be no advocate for enthusiasm. The fervor of devotion cannot always be kept up. That is inconsistent with the condition of our nature, and far from being necessary in our present state: but that cheerful serenity and composure in which moderate acts of devotion leave the mind, is an excellent temper for entering upon, and persevering with spirit and alacrity in, any useful and honorable undertaking.

The sum of this practical doctrine, suggested by revelation and confirmed by reason and observation, is, that no man can be happy who lives to himself; but that true happiness consists in having our faculties wholly engrossed by some worthy object, in the pursuit of which the strongest and best of our affections have their full play, and in which we enjoy all the consistent pleasures of our whole nature; that though a regard to our greatest happiness be of excellent use, (particularly about the beginning of our progress towards perfection and happiness, in bringing our inferior appetites and passions into due subjection to the superior powers of our nature,) yet that self-love, or a regard to ourselves, is very apt to grow too intense, and is, in fact, the cause of a great deal of the useless anxiety, perplexity, and misery there is in the world, and that, therefore, it ought to be our care, that our minds be engrossed as much as possible by other objects; and that even motives to virtue, which turn our attention frequently upon ourselves, should be used with caution; for fear of feeding that vanity and self-conceit, which we ought to study every method of repressing, as the greatest bane of true religion, being most opposite to the genuine temper of Christianity, and the most destructive of human happiness.

## THE DANGER OF BAD HABITS.

A SERMON.

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Hosea, iv. 17.

Ephraim is joined to idols. Let him alone.

EPHRAIM is here put for the whole kingdom of Israel, of which it was a part; and this awful sentence pronounced upon it was delivered during its declension, and not long before its final dissolution by the kings of Assyria.

Many prophets had God sent to this unhappy nation, and by repeated messages had he expostulated with them, from time to time, for their crying wickedness and provocations. They had had line upon line, and precept upon precept; but all had been to no purpose. They showed no sign of repentance, but "held fast their iniquity, and would not let it go," till the Divine patience and forbearance were wearied out. Mercy could plead for them no longer; their fate was determined; and the execution of the just judgments of God upon them was only delayed, but was sure to take place in the end.

This is the case of a whole nation abandoned of God in this fearful manner. But whatever has been the case of one nation, may not only be the case of another nation, but also that of any individual; and it is the possibility of this being the case of our own nation, or of ourselves, that it makes to demand our attention. To the Almighty, with respect to



moral government, a nation is as one man, and one man as a whole nation. He punishes vice, and he rewards virtue, in both; and whatever is agreeable to wisdom and equity in the case of a nation, is likewise agreeable to wisdom and equity with respect to individuals. Supposing, therefore, that the cases are exactly similar, I shall, in discoursing from these words,

1. State the case with as much exactness as I can;
2. Show the probability and danger of it with respect to human nature; and,
3. Consider the equity and propriety of it with respect to God, applying the whole doctrine to the cases of individuals.

In the first place, I am to state this case with as much exactness as I can.

In general, when any person is in the condition of Ephraim, in my text, so that God shall, as it were, say of him, "he is joined to idols," (he is joined to his lusts and vices,) "Let him alone," his day of trial and probation may be said to be, to all important purposes, expired. He is no longer a subject of moral government, because he is utterly incapable of amendment, which is the end of all moral discipline; and though, through the goodness of God, which is over all his works, he may live many years longer, yet his final doom is in reality fixed; his sentence is irrevocable, and the execution of it only deferred.

Not that the reformation of any sinner is ever naturally impossible, or that, if he truly repent, he shall not find favor at the hand of God: for "nothing is impossible with God," and "a truly humble, penitent, and contrite heart he will never despise, whenever, and wheresoever he finds it. But the change may be *morally impossible, or not to be expected according to the usual course of things*; and this is sufficient to authorize us to make use of the language.

Supposing a man to have lived so long in the habits of vice, as to have lost all relish for every thing that is good,

that he has no pleasure in the company of the sober, the virtuous, and the pious, but only in that of those who are as abandoned as himself, and that the greatest satisfaction he has is in corrupting others, (and farther than this depravity cannot go;) supposing that, in the course of his life, this man, besides every advantage for instruction, had experienced a great variety of prosperity and adversity; and yet that prosperity, instead of making him more thankful and obedient to God, made him forget him the more; and that afflictions, instead of softening and bettering his heart, only served to harden it and make it worse. Do I say that this abandoned wretch cannot be reformed, that God cannot, by any methods whatever, work upon his heart, and bring him to serious thought and reflection? By no means. That would be to limit the power of God, to whom all things are possible. He can work miracles, if he should think proper so to do. But then I say this would be a proper miracle, such as, at this day, we are not authorized to expect. And judging by what we see actually to take place, and what we must conclude to be just and right, God may, and probably will, leave such a one to himself. He may determine to try him no longer by any of those methods of his providence which are usually employed for the purpose of reclaiming sinners.

For instance, afflictions, and especially bodily sickness, are a great means of softening and bettering the minds of men; but God may resolve that he shall be visited with no remarkable sickness, till he be overtaken with his last; or he may cut him off by a sudden and unexpected death, in the midst of his crimes. The death of our friends, or any calamities befalling them, have often been the means, in the hands of Divine Providence, of bringing to serious thought and reflection those who have survived those strokes; but God may resolve never to touch him in so tender a part, but rather make use of his death as a warning and example to others.

Now when a man is thus left of God, and no providential

methods are used to reclaim him, we may conclude that he is irrecoverably lost. It is, in fact, and according to the course of nature, (and we know of no deviations from it since the age of the apostles,) absolutely impossible that he should repent, or be reformed. And though he should continue to live ever so long after God has thus forsaken him, he is only, in the awful language of Scripture, treasuring up "wrath against the day of wrath;" and there remains nothing for him but "a fearful looking-for of judgment," and of that "fiery indignation" which shall consume the adversaries of God.

Having thus stated the nature of this awful case, and shown in what sense, and on what account, it may be said that it is quite desperate and hopeless, viz. because it may be morally impossible that he should ever truly repent and be reformed, by reason of God's withdrawing those providential methods by which he uses to work upon men's hearts, and to bring them to serious thought and reflection; I come,

2dly. To consider the probability and danger of the case with respect to human nature; how far men are liable to fall into this fearful condition, and by what means they fall into it.

A man's case may be pronounced to be thus desperate, when his mind is brought into such a state, as that the necessary means of reformation shall have lost their effect upon him; and this is the natural consequence of confirmed habits of vice, and a long-continued neglect of the means of religion and virtue; — which is so far from being an impossible or improbable case, that it is a very general one.

In order to be the more sensible of this, you are to consider that vice is a habit, and therefore of a subtle and insinuating nature. By easy, pleasing, and seemingly harmless actions, men are often betrayed into a progress which grows every day more alarming. Our virtuous resolutions we may break with difficulty. It may be with pain and reluctance that we commit the first acts of sin, but the next are easier to us; and use, custom, and habit, will at last reconcile us to any thing, even things the very idea of which might at first be shocking to us.

Vice is a thing not to be trifled with. You may, by the force of vigorous resolution, break off in the early stages of it; but habits, when they have been confirmed and long continued, are obstinate things to contend with, and are hardly ever entirely subdued. When bad habits seem to be overcome, and we think we have got rid of our chains, they may perhaps only have become, as it were, invisible; so that when we thought we had recovered our freedom and strength, so as to be able to repel any temptation, we may lose all power of resistance on the first approach of it.

A man who has contracted a habit of vice, and been abandoned to sinful courses for some time, is never out of danger. He is exactly in the case of a man who has long labored under a chonical disease, and is perpetually subject to a relapse. The first shock of any disorder a man's constitution may bear; and, if he be not naturally subject to it, he may perfectly recover, and be out of danger. But when the general habit is such as that a relapse is apprehended, a man's friends and physicians are alarmed for him.

The reason is, that a relapse does not find a person in the condition in which he was when the first fit of illness seized him. That gave his constitution a shock, and left him enfeebled, so as to be less able to sustain another shock; and especially if it be more violent than the former, as is generally the case in those disorders.

In the very same dangerous situation is the man who has ever been addicted to vicious courses. He can never be said to be perfectly recovered, whatever appearances may promise, but is always in danger of a fatal relapse. He ought, therefore, to take the greatest care of himself. He is not in the condition of a person who has never known the ways of wickedness. He ought, therefore, to have the greatest distrust of himself, and set a double watch over his thoughts, words, and actions, for fear of a surprise. For if once, through the force of any particular temptation, he should fall back into his former vicious courses, and his

former disposition should return, his case will probably be desperate. He will plunge himself still deeper in wickedness; and his having abstained for a time, will only, as it were, have whetted his appetite, and make him swallow down the poison of sin by larger and more eager draughts than ever.

Such persons may be so entirely in the power of vicious habits, that they shall be in no sense their own masters. They may even see the danger they are in, wish to free themselves from the habits they have contracted, and yet find they have no force, or resolution, to relieve themselves. They are not to be rescued from the snare of the destroyer, and brought to their right mind, but by some uncommon and alarming providence, which is in the hands of God, and which he may justly withhold, when his patience and long-suffering have been much abused. Justly may he say to such an habitual sinner, as he did to Ephraim in my text, he is joined to idols, he is joined to his lusts, let him alone. He is determined to have the pleasure of sin, let him receive the wages of sin also.

This brings me to the third head of my discourse, in which I propose to consider the equity of the proceeding with respect to God.

It may be said that it is not agreeable to equity, for God to favor some with the means of improvement, and suffer others to abandon themselves to destruction, without a possibility of escaping. But I answer, that the persons whose case I have been describing, have had, and have outlived, their day of grace. God has long exercised forbearance towards them, but they have wearied it out; and it could not be expected to last for ever. They have had gracious invitations to repentance, but they have slighted them all: they stopped their ears, and refused to return. They have been tried with a great variety both of merciful and of afflictive providences, but they made no good use of them. "Why



then," as the prophet says, "should they be stricken any more, when they will only revolt more and more?"

A day of trial and probation, or what is frequently called a day of grace, must necessarily have some period. Else when would the time of retribution, when would the time of rewards and punishments, take place? A state of trial necessarily respects some future state, in which men must receive according to their deeds. But this state of trial it has pleased God to make of uncertain duration; no doubt, to keep us always watchful, having our accounts always in readiness, because in such an hour as we think not, our Lord may come and require them. The state of trial, therefore, is with some, of much longer duration than it is with others; and God is the sovereign arbiter of every thing relating to it. He makes our lives longer or shorter, as seems good in his sight, and at death, a state of trial ends of course. We may, therefore, as well pretend to question the justice and equity of God's cutting us off by death when and in what manner he pleases, as arraign his justice in sealing up our doom, though while we live, whenever he pleases.

No doubt God gives to every person a sufficient trial; for, "he is not willing that any should perish, but had rather that all should come to repentance." We may, therefore, assure ourselves, that he will not cease to endeavour to promote the reformation of a sinner by all proper means, till he shall become absolutely incorrigible, and the methods taken to reclaim him would be abused and lost. And if we consider that every means of improvement neglected, adds to a man's guilt and aggravates his condemnation; it may even appear to be mercy in the Divine Being to grant a person no farther means of improvement, after it has been found, by actual trial, that they would only have been abused, and therefore have proved highly injurious to him. Not but that it might have been sufficient to silence every cavil of this kind, to say, as Paul does on a similar occasion, "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God;" or with Abraham, "Shall not the

Judge of all the earth do that which is right?" But it is proper to show, that, in the midst of judgment, God remembers mercy.

There is a very pathetic description of the case of a sinner who, after a relapse into vicious courses, is justly abandoned of God to seek his own destruction, in a parable of our Saviour's, formed upon the popular opinion of the Jews of his age concerning demons, or evil spirits: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there, and the last state of that man is worse than the first." The application of this parable either to the case of the Jews (for whom it seems to have been originally intended) or to particular persons, who, after a seeming reformation, have relapsed into vicious courses, is too obvious to be particularly dwelt upon.

To come, therefore, to a general application of this doctrine: Let all persons who are sensible of the folly and evil of sinful courses, and of the danger of persisting in them, make a speedy and effectual retreat. Let us do nothing by halves. To be lukewarm in religion, is, in effect, to have no religion at all. We must give God our hearts; we must give him an undivided affection; for we cannot truly love God and Mammon, or the world, at the same time. In this unsettled and fluctuating disposition, temptations will have a great advantage over us. We shall ever be in danger of throwing off all restraint, and of running into every kind of riot and excess, till nothing on the part of Divine Providence shall occur to reclaim us.

In reality, my brethren, and to every valuable end and purpose, the term of our trial and probation does generally expire long before the term of our natural lives. For how

few are there whose characters, whose dispositions, or habits of mind, undergo any considerable change after they are grown to man's estate ! Our tempers and general characters are usually fixed as soon as we have fixed ourselves in a regular employment and mode of life ; for, after this, we see almost every person continue the very same to the end of his life. Some remarkable providential occurrence, some fit of sickness, or some unforeseen misfortune of any kind, may alarm those who have been addicted to vicious courses, and for a time bring them to serious thought and reflection ; but if they be turned thirty or forty years of age, how soon do the serious purposes, which they then form, go off, and their former modes of thinking and living return ! Not only with respect to temper and disposition of mind, as it relates to virtue or vice, but with respect to those habits which are indifferent to morals, we see that, excepting one case perhaps in a thousand, they are not subject to change after the period that I have mentioned. Any habits that we contract early in life, any particular bias or inclination, any particular cast of thought, or mode of conversation, even any particular gesture of body, as in walking, sitting, &c. we are universally known by among our acquaintance, from the time that we properly enter life, to the time that we have done with it ; as much as we are by the tone of our voice, or our handwriting, which, likewise, are of the nature of habits or customs.

These observations may be applied in a great measure even to matters of opinion, (though, naturally, nothing seems to be more variable,) as well as to mental and corporeal habits. A man who has studied, or who fancies he has studied, any particular subject, sooner or later makes up his mind, as we say, with respect to it ; and after this, all arguments, intended to convince him of his mistake, only serve to confirm him in his chosen way of thinking. An argument, or evidence of any kind, that is entirely new to a man, may make a proper impression upon him ; but if it has

been often proposed to him, and he has had time to view and consider it, so as to have hit upon any method of evading the force of it, he is afterwards quite callous to it, and can very seldom be prevailed upon to give it any proper attention. This consideration accounts, in some measure, both for the great influence of Christianity on its first publication, when the doctrines were new and striking, and also for the absolute indifference with which the same great truths are now heard in all Christian countries.

It accounts also for the more striking effect of the preaching of the Methodists, than ours. They find people utterly ignorant, to whom the truths, the promises, and the threatenings of the gospel are really new; whereas we have to do with persons who have heard them from their infancy, and have, alas! acquired a habit of disregarding them. But then our people having, in general, been brought up in habits of virtue, such great changes of character and conduct are less necessary in their case. It is to be regretted, however, that they too seldom exceed that mediocrity of character which they acquire in early life. I speak of the generality among us; for others are remarkable exceptions, persons of disinterested and heroic virtue, in full proportion to the superior advantages which they enjoy.

The resistance which the mind makes to the admission of truth, when it has been strongly prejudiced against it, is evident both with respect to the belief of Christianity in general, and of particular opinions relating to it. There are many persons by no means defective with respect to judgment in other things, of whose conversion to Christianity we can have no more reasonable expectation, than of the sun rising in the west, even though they should consent to hear or read every thing that we could propose to them for that purpose. There are also many conscientious and intelligent Roman Catholics, absurd as we justly think their principles to be, who would deliberately read the best defences of Protestantism without any other effect than that of being

more confirmed in their prejudices against it. The same may be said of persons professing other modes of faith, so that their persuasions are not to be changed, except by such a method as that which was applied for the conversion of the apostle Paul. The same observation may also be applied to many opinions, and especially to a general bias or turn of thinking in matters of a political nature, and even in subjects of philosophy or criticism.

Facts of this kind, of which we are all witnesses, and which come within the observation of every day in our lives, show, in a very striking light, what care we ought to take in forming our first judgments of things, and in contracting our first habits, and therefore deserve the more especial attention of young persons; for we see that when these principles and habits are once properly formed, they are generally fixed for life. Whatever is fact with respect to mankind in general, we ought to conclude to be the case with respect to ourselves; that the cause is in the constitution of our common nature, and dependent upon the fundamental laws of it, and, no doubt, a wise and useful part of it; and we must not expect that miracles will be wrought in our favor.

To show that there is the greatest advantage, as well as some inconvenience, resulting from this disposition to fixity, as we call it, in our own nature, let it be observed, that if there was nothing fixed or permanent in the human character, we should find the same inconvenience as if any other law of nature was unsettled. We should be perpetually at a loss how to conduct ourselves, how to behave to mankind in general, and even to our own particular friends and acquaintance, especially after having been for any space of time absent from them. We do not expect to find persons the very same in all changes of condition or circumstances, as in sickness and health, prosperity and adversity, &c.; but then we generally know what kind of change to expect in them in those circumstances, and we regulate our con-



duct towards them by our experience of the usual effect of similar changes.

These observations, when applied to opinions, may serve to amuse us, but when they are applied to practice, they ought seriously to alarm us. Let all those, therefore, who being at all advanced in life, see reason to be dissatisfied with themselves, with their disposition of mind, and their general conduct, be alarmed; for there is certainly the greatest reason for it, probably much more than they are themselves aware of. Persons in this state of mind always flatter themselves with a time when they shall have more leisure for repentance and reformation; but, judging from observation on others, which is the surest guide that they can follow (infinitely better than their own imaginations,) they may conclude that it is almost a certainty that such a time will never come.

If they should have the leisure for repentance and reformation which they promised themselves, it is not probable that sufficient strength of resolution will come along with it. Indeed, all resolutions to repent at a future time are necessarily insincere, and must be a mere deception, because they imply a preference of a man's present habits and conduct, that he is really unwilling to change them, and that nothing but necessity would lead him to make any attempt of the kind. In fact, he can only mean that he will discontinue particular actions, his habits or temper of mind remaining the same.

Besides, a real, effectual repentance or reformation is such a total change in a man as cannot, in the nature of things, take place in a short space of time. A man's habits are formed by the scenes he has gone through, and the impressions which they have made upon him; and when death approaches, a man has not another life, like this, to live over again. He may, even on a death-bed, most sincerely wish that he had a pious and benevolent disposition, with the love of virtue in all its branches: but that wish,

though it be ever so sincere and earnest, can no more produce a proper change in his mind, than it can restore him to health, or make him taller or stronger than he is.

The precise time when this confirmed state of mind takes place, or, in the language of Scripture, the time when any person is thus left of God, or left to himself, cannot be determined. It is necessarily various and uncertain. But in general we may say, that when any person has been long abandoned to vicious courses, when vice is grown into a habit with him, and especially when his vices are more properly of a mental nature, such as a disposition to envy, malice, or selfishness (which are the most inveterate, the most difficult to be eradicated of all vices,) when neither health nor sickness, prosperity nor adversity; when neither a man's own reflections, the remonstrances of his friends, nor admonitions from the pulpit, have any visible effect upon him; when, after this, we see no great change in his worldly affairs or connexions, but he goes on from day to day, from month to month, and from year to year, without any sensible alteration; there is reason to fear that he is fallen into this fatal security, that he is, as it were, fallen asleep, and that this sleep will be the sleep of death.

However, a shadow of hope is not to be despised. One chance in a thousand is still a chance; and there are persons whose vigor of mind is such, that, when sufficiently roused, they are equal to almost any thing. Let those, therefore, who see their danger at any time of life, be up and doing, working out their salvation with fear and trembling, that, if possible, they may flee from the wrath to come.

## HABITUAL DEVOTION.

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God, my Christian brethren, is a being with whom we all of us have to do, and the relation we stand in to him is the most important of all our relations. Our connexions with other beings and other things are slight and transient, in comparison with this. God is our maker, our constant preserver and benefactor, our moral governor, and our final judge. He is present with us wherever we are ; the secrets of all hearts are constantly known to him, and he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Here, then, is a situation, in which we find ourselves, that demands our closest attention. The consideration is, in the highest degree, interesting and alarming ; knowing how absolutely dependent we are upon God, that “in him we live, and move, and have our being,” and knowing also, that by vice and folly we have rendered ourselves justly obnoxious to his displeasure.

Now, to think, and to act, in a manner corresponding to this our necessary intercourse with God, certainly requires that we keep up an habitual regard to it ; and a total, or very great degree of inattention to it, must be highly criminal and dangerous. Accordingly, we find in the Scriptures, that it is characteristic of a good man, that “he sets the Lord always before him,” and that “he acknowledges God in all his ways.” Whereas, it is said of the wicked, that “God is not in all their thoughts ;” and elsewhere, that “there is no fear of God before their eyes ;” that “they put the thoughts of God far from them, and will not the knowledge of the Most High.”

This circumstance seems to furnish a pretty good test of the state of a man's mind with respect to virtue and vice. The most abandoned and profligate of mankind are those who live without God in the world, entirely thoughtless of his being, perfections and providence; having their hearts wholly engrossed with this world and the things of it; by which means those passions which terminate in the enjoyment of them, are inflamed to such a degree, that no other principle can restrain their indulgence. These persons may be called practical atheists; and the temper of mind they have acquired, often leads them to deny both natural and revealed religion. They secretly wish, indeed they cannot but wish, there may be no truth in those principles, the apprehension of which is apt to give them disturbance; and hence they give little attention to the evidence that is produced for them, and magnify all the objections they hear made to them. And it is well known, that, in a mind so strongly biassed, the most cogent reasons often amount to nothing, while the most trifling cavils pass for demonstration. It is the same with respect to any other speculation, when the mind has got a bias in favor of any particular conclusion.

On the other hand, a truly and perfectly good man loves, and therefore cherishes, the thought of God, his father and his friend; till every production of divine power and skill, every instance of divine bounty, and every event of divine providence, never fails to suggest to his mind the idea of the great Author of all things, the Giver of every good and every perfect gift, and the sovereign Disposer of all affairs and of all events. Thus he lives, as it were, constantly seeing Him who is invisible. He sees God in every thing, and he sees every thing in God. He dwells in love, and thereby dwells in God, and God in him. And so long as he considers himself as living in the world which God has made, and partaking of the bounty with which his providence supplies him; so long as he is intent upon discharging his duty,

in the situation in which he believes the Divine Being has placed him, and meets with no greater trials and difficulties than, he is persuaded, his God and Father has appointed for his good; it is almost impossible that the thought of God should ever be long absent from his mind. Every thing he sees or feels will make it recur again and again perpetually. His whole life will be, as it were, one act of devotion; and this state of mind, being highly pleasurable, and his satisfaction having infinite sources, will be daily increasing, so as to grow more equable, and more intense, to all eternity; when it will be joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

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1. An habitual regard to God in our actions tends greatly to keep us firm in our adherence to our duty. It has pleased Divine Providence to place man in a state of trial and probation. This world is strictly such. We are surrounded with a great variety of objects, adapted to gratify a variety of senses, with which we are furnished. The pleasures they give us are all innocent in moderation, and they engage us in a variety of agreeable and proper pursuits. But our natures are such, as that the frequent indulgence of any of our appetites tends to make its demands inordinate, and to beget an habitual propensity to indulge it; and this proneness to the excessive indulgence of any of our passions enslaves our minds, and is highly dangerous and criminal. By this means we too often come to forget God our maker, to injure our fellow-creatures of mankind, and to do a still greater and more irreparable injury to ourselves, both in mind and body.

It has pleased Almighty God, therefore, from the concern he had for our good, to forbid these immoderate indulgences of the love of pleasure, riches, and honor, by express laws, guarded with the most awful sanctions. Now we are certainly less liable to forget these laws, and our obligation to observe them, when we keep up an habitual regard to our great Lawgiver and Judge; when we consider him as



always present with us ; when we consider that his eyes are in every place, beholding both the evil and the good ; that he sees in secret, and will one day reward openly. In this manner we shall acquire an habitual reverence for God and his laws, which will end in an habitual obedience to them, even without any express regard to their authority. Thus we should certainly be less likely to neglect the request of a friend, or the injunction of a master, if we could always keep in mind the remembrance of our friend or master ; and a constant attention to them would certainly give us a habit of pleasing them in all things.

2. An habitual regard to God promotes an uniform cheerfulness of mind ; it tends to dissipate anxiety, or melancholy, and may even, in some cases, prevent madness. Without a regard to God, as the maker and governor of all things, this world affords but a gloomy and uncomfortable prospect. Without this, we see no great end for which we have to live ; we have no great or animating object to pursue ; and whatever schemes we may be carrying on, our views are bounded by a very short and narrow space. To an atheist, therefore, every thing must appear little, dark, and confused. And let it be considered that, in proportion as we forget God, and lose our regard to him, we adopt the sentiments and views of atheists, and shut our eyes to the bright and glorious prospects which religion exhibits to us.

Religion, my brethren, the doctrine of a God, of a providence, and of a future state, opens an immense, a glorious, and most transporting prospect ; and every man, who is humbly conscious that he conforms to the will of his Maker, may enjoy and rejoice in this prospect. Considering ourselves as the subjects of the moral government of God, we see a most important sphere of action in which we have to exert ourselves ; we have the greatest of all objects set before us, “glory, honor, and immortality ; an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away,” as the reward of our faithful perseverance in well-doing ; and we have a

boundless existence, an eternity, in which to pursue and enjoy this reward.

These great views and objects, the contemplation of which must be habitual to the mind which keeps up an habitual regard to God, cannot fail to diminish the lustre of the things of time and sense, which engage our attention here below; and while they lessen our solicitude and anxiety about them, they must cure that fretfulness and distress of mind which is occasioned by the disappointments we meet with in them.

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3. An habitual regard to God fits a man for the business of this life, giving a peculiar presence and intrepidity of mind; and is, therefore, the best support in difficult enterprises of any kind. A man who keeps up an habitual regard to God, who acknowledges him in all his ways, and lives a life of devotion to him, has a kind of union with God; feeling, in some measure, the same sentiments, and having the same views. Hence, being, in the language of the apostle, “a worker together with God,” and therefore being confident that God is with him and for him, “he will not fear what man can do unto him.” Moreover, fearing God, and having confidence in him, he is a stranger to every other fear. Being satisfied that God will work all his pleasure in him, by him, and for him, he is free from alarm and perturbation, and is not easily disconcerted, so as to lose the possession of his own mind. And having this presence of mind, being conscious of the integrity of his own heart, confiding in the favor of his Maker, and therefore, sensible that there is nothing of much real value that he can lose, he will have leisure to consider every situation in which he finds himself, and be able to act with calmness and prudence, as circumstances may require.

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Having thus considered the important effects of an habitual regard to God in all our ways, I come to treat of the most proper and effectual methods of promoting this temper of mind.

1. If you be really desirous to cultivate this habitual devotion, endeavour, in the first place, to divest your minds of too great a multiplicity of the cares of this world. The man who lives to God, in the manner which I have been endeavouring to describe, lives to him principally, and loves and confides in him above all. To be solicitous about this world, therefore, as if our chief happiness consisted in it, must be incompatible with this devotion. We cannot serve God and Mammon. If we be Christians, we should consider, that the great and professed object of our religion, is the revelation of a future life, of unspeakably more importance to us than this transitory world, and the perishable things of it. As Christians, we should consider ourselves as citizens of heaven, and only strangers and pilgrims here below. We must therefore see, that, as Christians, there is certainly required of us a considerable degree of indifference about this world, which was only intended to serve us as a passage to a better.

The Divine Being himself has made wise provision for lessening the cares of this world, by the appointment of one day in seven, for the purpose of rest and avocation from labor. Let us then, at least, take the advantage which this day gives us, of "calling off our eyes from beholding vanity," and of "quickenings us in the ways of God."

This advice I would particularly recommend to those persons who are engaged in arts, manufactures, and commerce. For, highly beneficial as these things are, in a political view, and subservient to the elegant enjoyment of life, they seem not to be so favorable to religion and devotion, as the business of agriculture; and for this reason, therefore, probably among others, the Divine Being forbade commerce to the people of the Jews, and gave them such laws as are chiefly adapted to a life of husbandry. The husbandman is in a situation peculiarly favorable to the contemplation of the works of God, and to a sense of his dependence upon him. The rain from heaven, and various circumstances relating to

the weather, &c., on which the goodness of his crops depends, he receives as from the hand of God, and is hardly sensible of any secondary or more immediate cause. If he understand any thing of the principles of vegetation, and can account for a few obvious appearances upon what we call the laws of nature; these laws he knows to be the express appointment of God; and he cannot help perceiving the wisdom and goodness of God in the appointment; so that the objects about which he is daily conversant, are, in their nature, a lesson of gratitude and praise.

Besides, the employment of the husbandman being chiefly to bring food out of the earth, his attention is more confined to the real wants or at least, the principal conveniencies, of life; and his mind is not, like that of the curious artist and manufacturer, so liable to be fascinated by a taste for superfluities, and the fictitious wants of men.

Nor, lastly, does the business of husbandry so wholly engross a man's thoughts and attention, while he is employed about it, as many of the arts and manufactures, and as commerce necessarily does. And it should be a general rule with us, that the more attention of mind our employment in life requires, the more careful should we be to draw our thoughts from it, on the day of rest, and at other intervals of time set apart for devotional purposes. Otherwise, a worldly-minded temper, not being checked or controlled by any thing of a contrary tendency, will necessarily get possession of our hearts.

2. This brings me to the second advice, which is, by no means to omit stated times of worshipping God by prayer, public and private. Every passion and affection in our frame is strengthened by the proper and natural expression of it. Thus frequent intercourse and conversation with those we love promote friendship, and so also the intercourse we keep up with God by prayer, in which we express our reverence and love of him and our confidence in him, promotes a spirit of devotion, and makes it easier for the

ideas of the Divine Being and his providence to occur to the mind on other occasions, when we are not formally praying to him. Besides, if persons whose thoughts are much employed in the business of this life, had no time set apart for the exercises of devotion, they would be in danger of neglecting it entirely; at least, to a degree that would be attended with a great diminution of their virtue and happiness.

But, in order that the exercises of devotion may be the most efficacious to promote the true spirit and general habit of it, it is advisable that prayers, properly so called, that is, direct addresses to the Divine Being, be short. The strong feelings of reverence, love, and confidence, which ought to animate our devotions, cannot be kept up in such minds as ours, through a prayer of considerable length; and a tedious languor in prayer is of great disservice to the life of religion, as it accustoms the mind to think of God with indifference; whereas, it is of the utmost consequence, that the Divine Being always appear to us as an object of the greatest importance, and engage the whole attention of our souls. Except, therefore, in public, where prayers of a greater length are, in a manner, necessary, and where the presence and concurrence of our fellow-worshippers assist to keep up the fervor of our common devotion, it seems more advisable, that devotional exercises have intervals of meditation, calculated to impress our minds more deeply with the sentiments we express; and that they be used without any strict regard to particular times, places, or posture of body.

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3. In the course of your usual employments, omit no proper opportunity of turning your thoughts towards God. Habitually regard him as the ultimate cause, and proper author of every thing you see, and the disposer of all events that respect yourselves or others. This will not fail to make the idea of God occur familiarly to your mind, and influence your whole conduct.

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4. In a more especial manner, never fail to have recourse to God upon every occasion of strong emotion of mind, whether it be of a pleasurable, or of a painful nature. When your mind is laboring under distressing doubts and great anxiety, or when you are in any way embarrassed in the conduct of your affairs, fly to God, as your friend and father, your counsellor and your guide. In a sincere and earnest endeavour to discharge your duty, and to act the upright and honorable part, commit your way unto him, repose yourselves upon his providence, confiding in his care to overrule every thing for the best; and you will find a great, and almost instantaneous relief. Your perturbation of mind will subside, as by a charm, and the storm will become a settled calm. Tumultuous and excessive joy will also be moderated by this means; and thus all your emotions will be rendered more equable, more pleasurable, and more lasting. And this is produced not by any supernatural agency of God on the mind, but is the natural effect of placing entire confidence in a Being of perfect wisdom and goodness.

But the capital advantage you will derive from this practice will be, that the idea of God being, by this means, associated with all the strongest emotions of your mind, your whole stock of devotional sentiments and feelings will be increased. All those strong emotions, now separately indistinguishable, will coalesce with the idea of God, and make part of the complex train of images suggested by the term, so that you will afterwards think of God oftener, and with more fervor than before; and the thought of him will have greater influence with you than ever.

5. In order to cultivate the spirit of habitual devotion, labor to free your minds from all consciousness of guilt and self-reproach, by means of a constant attention to the upright and steady discharge of the whole of your duty. In consequence of neglecting our duty, we become backwards, as we may say, to make our appearance before God. We cannot look up to him with full confidence of his

favor and blessing; and are, therefore, too apt to omit devotion entirely. Besides, we always feel an aversion to the exercise of self-abasement and contrition, which are all the sentiments that we can with propriety indulge in those circumstances; especially as we have a secret suspicion, that we shall, for some time at least, go on to live as we have done; so that rather than confess our sins, and continue to live in them, we choose not to make confession at all.

But this, my brethren, is egregious trifling, and highly dangerous. Thus, at best, all improvement is at a stand with us, if we be not going fatally backwards in our moral state. If this be our character (as I believe it is, more or less, that of a very great number even of those I have called the better sort of the middle classes of men) let us in time, and in good earnest, cast off all our sins, negligences, and follies, by true repentance. Let us draw near, and acquaint ourselves with God, that we may be at peace. You can have no true peace, assurance, or satisfaction of mind in this life without it: for, if you be of the class I am now referring to, it is too late for you to have a perfect enjoyment of a life of sin and dissipation. And between that kind of peace, or rather stupor, which those who are abandoned to wickedness, those who are wholly addicted to this world, and make it their sole end (or those who are grossly ignorant of religion) enjoy, and that inward peace and satisfaction which accompanies the faithful and earnest discharge of every known duty, there is no sufficient medium. You may go about seeking rest in this wide space, while your hearts are divided between God and the world, but you will find none; whereas, the fruit of righteousness, of a sincere and impartial, though imperfect, obedience to the law of God, is peace and assurance for ever.

6. To facilitate the exercise of devotion, cultivate in your minds just ideas of God with whom you have to do upon those occasions, and divest your minds, as far as possible, of

all superstitious and dishonorable notions of him. Consider him as the good Father of the prodigal son, in that excellent parable of our Saviour. Let it sink deep into your minds, as one of the most important of all principles, that the God with whom we have to do, is essentially, of himself, and without regard to any foreign consideration whatever, “abundant in mercy, not willing that any should perish, but that he had rather that all should come to repentance;” and then, notwithstanding you consider yourselves as frail, imperfect, and sinful creatures; and though you cannot help accusing yourselves of much negligence, folly, and vice; you may still approach him with perfect confidence, in his readiness to receive, love and cherish you, upon your sincere return to him.

In this light our Lord Jesus Christ always represented “his Father and our Father, his God and our God.” This is the most solid ground of consolation to minds burdened with a sense of guilt; and what is of great advantage, it is the most natural, the most easy and intelligible of all others. If once you quit this firm hold, you involve yourselves in a system, and a labyrinth, in which you either absolutely find no rest and wander in uncertainty and horror; or, if you do attain to any thing of assurance, it is of such a kind, and in such a manner, as can hardly fail to feed that spiritual pride which will lead you to despise others; nay, unless counteracted by other causes, too often ends in a spirit of censoriousness, hatred, and persecution.

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We well know, my Christian brethren, what it is that the Lord our God requires of us, in order to live and to die in his favor; namely, “to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.” To this plain path of duty, then, let us adhere, without being anxious about any thing farther. Whether we have those fervors of devotion which some feel, and are apt to be proud of, or not, we shall experience that great peace of mind which all those have who

keep God's law ; and having lived the life of the righteous, our latter end will also be like his ; the foundation of our joy being " the testimony of our consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, — we have had our conversation in the world."

It is true, we are imperfect, sinful creatures ; but, notwithstanding this, we have all possible encouragement given us to trust in the abundant mercy of our gracious God and Father, in that mercy which is essential to his nature, as a Being who is infinitely good, and who is love itself ; and which, if we could entertain the least doubt concerning it, he has fully declared to all the world, by Moses and the prophets, by Jesus Christ and his apostles, whom he sent into the world to preach the grateful doctrine of repentance and remission of sins, thereby to redeem (that is, to deliver) us from all iniquity and to reconcile us to God. Animated, therefore, by the glorious promises of the gospel, let us, my Christian brethren, be " steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labor shall not finally be in vain in the Lord."

## SOCIAL AND PUBLIC WORSHIP.

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IF an attention be paid to the real principles of human nature, which Mr. Wakefield calls the character of the human mind, it appears to me, that we must perceive the wisdom of all the usual means of virtue, and of social prayer among the rest, as what every man, be his attainments what they will, really needs, and may usefully avail himself of. Every passion or affection of our minds is strengthened by proper exercise ; and all the social passions (and those of devotion are all of this class) are best exercised in company. Will any person pretend that he can be so cheerful alone, as in the company of those who are as much exhilarated as himself? Does not every man feel the glow of patriotism with double fervor when others join him in expressing the same patriotic sentiments? Is not this the principle on which all clubs, and social meetings of that kind, are formed? Must not, then, the sentiments of devotion be felt with peculiar fervor when others join us in them, either in hymns or in prayer? Let any man go into a Catholic church, abroad, where he will see, as I have done, the natural expressions of devotion, unrestrained by shame, and where there is no suspicion of hypocrisy, and say whether he be not excited to devotion by the sight. If he do not choose to go into a church, he may be some judge in this case by seeing even the counterfeit devotion of an actor on the stage, or viewing it in a good picture.



Certainly there are seasons in which it is best for a man to be alone, and to pour out his heart before his Father, who seeth in secret; but at other times, especially when the mind is less disposed to fervor, it is equally advantageous to join in the common forms of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and petition, with others. We also feel the sentiments of brotherly love with peculiar warmth when we present ourselves at the same time in the presence of our common Father, and jointly express the feelings that belong to our common and most interesting relation to him. This practice must, in a more especial manner, tend to repress all resentment, and promote compassion and good-will. We are all the offending children of the same Parent, and equally stand in need of the same indulgence and mercy: let us therefore join in supplicating it together.

I do not say that our present forms of devotion will suit a man in the more advanced state of being to which he will be raised in the state after death, because I know nothing of that state; but they appear to be well adapted to human nature in this present state; and we shall consult our improvement infinitely better by conforming to them, than by attempting to get above them, and disregarding them. Besides, the bulk of mankind will never be in that high class of Christians which does not stand in need of the usual modes of improvement; and, in whatever rank our vanity may lead us to place ourselves, we should consider how our example may affect them.

You may think that you can employ your time more usefully in your closet than you can do in the church, or the meeting-house; and in some cases no doubt you may; there being no general rule without some exceptions; and essential social duties may well occasionally supersede the attendance on public worship. But, in general, I am well persuaded that a man cannot spend his time to better purpose than by setting an example of a regard to the forms of religion to those who look up to him; to say nothing of the improve-

ment that he may himself receive there, if he give due attention to the duties of the place. If he be inattentive to them, he may feel his time pass irksomely enough; and, as far as his own improvement is concerned, it might have been better for him to have been elsewhere; but the same objection will lie against any other duty, in any other place.

The mind is improved by a repetition of good impressions. We all know that a serious turn of mind is acquired by reading serious books, and by serious conversation; and that levity of mind is acquired by impressions of an opposite nature; and if every person be the better for hearing a good discourse, on a moral subject, when the attention is not fatigued by the length of it, some real improvement may be had from a repetition of the same sentiments and ideas expressed in the form of a prayer, provided that be not too long.

There appear to me to be unreasonable complaints of long prayers, when pious discourses, of much greater length, are not particularly complained of; and a prayer may be considered as a particular mode of presenting the same pious sentiments to the mind, so that the hearer of it may be edified, whether he join in it so as to make it his own prayer or not. If this exercise, which requires a considerable effort of the mental faculties, be omitted, the mind, in a passive state, will still be subject to the impression of useful sentiments, and may derive considerable advantages from the service.

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It is even wise in a man to use some little effort with himself, and not to desist from religious exercises on the first symptoms of weariness, but to persevere in his attention to what he hears; and this is no more than we are obliged to do in a thousand other cases, and what we find our account in. An exercise of any kind that is tiresome at first may not only cease to be tiresome, but even become pleasant, so that we cannot well do without it; and if it be omitted, we

shall feel a vacuity which nothing else can supply. This will be equally the case with religious exercises; and is it not desirable that the mind be brought into such a state as not only to bear, but to relish, religious exercises of all kinds; since it must be an effectual security to virtue? We know by reading and observation, that some persons have been able to relish nothing so much. Our Saviour could continue a whole night in prayer to God; and the apostle exhorts us, no doubt from his own practice, to pray without ceasing; and, allowing for strong expressions, there must surely be some meaning in such language as this.

If we discontinue religious exercises in public, we shall in time become less disposed to them in private, and be in danger of losing all sense of habitual devotion, except what may remain from former good impressions. Habits of piety or benevolence require not only to be formed, but to be kept up and invigorated by repeated acts; and sure I am, that this habitual devotion, which is the highest attainment of man, and the most perfective of his rational nature, can never be acquired or kept up without such frequent meditation on subjects of religion, reading the Scriptures, and actual or virtual prayer, as will not in general be attained without the aid of public worship, in which the attention will be necessarily solicited at least by proper objects; where the Scriptures are always more or less read, where proper discourses are delivered, and where the Supreme Being is invoked, and numbers join in the same forms of adoration.

In all matters of great importance, it is our wisdom not to depend wholly on voluntary acts, but to lay ourselves under a kind of necessity of doing that which is only ultimately, and not immediately and obviously beneficial to us. If a young person had nothing of the nature of a task imposed upon him, he would hardly be brought to learn any thing. Before he could be brought to apply from free choice, the proper season of acquiring some branches of knowledge would be past, and could never be recalled,

Now, in many respects, we are all but children and in our noviciate, and we shall act a very unwise part, if we leave those practices which furnish the elements of religious feelings and habits, to our own arbitrary pleasure. In this case the practice will often be neglected, and, consequently, the habit will never be formed.

It is happy for many persons that the force of custom operates as a kind of law, and obliges them to attend to acts of public and private devotion from their early years, and even through the whole of life. By this means they are continually kept within the influence of good impressions, the silent operation of which is unspeakably beneficial to them. It may sometimes subject them to pass an hour in a manner rather unpleasant to them, but by degrees they become reconciled to it; so that, from being irksome, it becomes tolerable, and from tolerable, such as, whether positively pleasurable or not, they do not know how to do without. However, by this means they are kept out of the paths of vice, and in the practice of virtue.

I own myself to be so far from Christian perfection, that I think myself happy in such a necessary mode of spending my time, especially on Sundays, as serves to keep up a constant attention to my situation as an accountable being, to my relation to God, and my dependance upon him, so that I cannot be long without being reminded of my destination to a future and everlasting state; as by this means I hope I am more in the way of acquiring those sentiments and habits which will qualify me for it. Let others fancy that they can do without these ordinary helps; I cannot but think there would be more wisdom in a greater distrust of themselves. "Happy is he that feareth always."

## PRAYER FOR TEMPORAL BLESSINGS.

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IN what unqualified, and therefore indecent, manner, some persons may pray for health, or for any thing else, I cannot say, and therefore cannot defend. But that health, or any other temporal blessing, or what is usually deemed such, may be very innocently prayed for, I have no doubt, if we conduct ourselves by scripture precept or example. Hezekiah prayed most earnestly for recovery from sickness, that is, for health and life, and was not censured, but graciously heard. David both prayed and gave thanks for the same blessing, and others of a similar nature; and our Lord authorizes us to pray for our daily bread, which is the means of supporting health and life.

If the mere possibility of any thing being no blessing, but a curse to us, be a reason why we should not pray for it, such is our ignorance, that we ought to forbear to pray for any thing. What is there in nature that is absolutely, and universally, either good or evil? Certainly not life itself, or any thing that contributes to the preservation of it. Nay, as we ought, in strictness, to judge of moral as of natural things, can any person be absolutely certain that he shall not be ultimately better, as Peter probably was, for falling by any particular temptation? Might he not, therefore, on this principle, question the propriety of our Saviour's direction, to pray that we be not led into temptation? Surely,



then, seeing to what it leads, we cannot be too careful how we give way to the idea of aiming at a degree of refinement and perfection, in the method of devotion, unknown to Christ or the apostles, so as to think ourselves at liberty to depart from their principles and practice.

We are certainly allowed by an universal and most indulgent Parent, who knoweth our frame, (and the practice is abundantly authorized in the Scriptures,) to indulge our natural wishes for whatever appears to us to be good for us at the time, and also to express that wish in the form of a prayer ; but always with due submission to the will of God, who knows better than we do what is really good for us. Christ even prayed to be excused the pains of a violent death, though he had been apprized that it was the wise intention of God that he should submit to them, and was prepared so to do. To pretend to greater refinement and greater strength of mind than this, is unnatural. We only deceive and injure ourselves by the attempt.

## OSTENTATION IN RELIGION.

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YOU think, that by refusing to pray in public, you avoid ostentation, which is certainly a bad thing, and ought, no doubt, to be guarded against. But an apparent indifference to religion is another bad thing, and therefore ought likewise to be guarded against; and how is it to be known that a man is devout at all, if no person ever see, or know him to be so? To avoid ostentation on this rigorous idea, not only must a man never pray out of his closet, but be careful that it be not known that he prays, even there; because his retiring for that purpose will, if it be known, have the same effect. And since the same reason requires that similar precautions be taken with respect to alms-giving, and every other moral virtue, how is the religious man to be distinguished from the irreligious, at least from the careless and indifferent? Is no man ever to discover any zeal for religion, or is his zeal to be shown in words only, and never by his actions, lest his conduct should savor of ostentation?

Our Lord absolutely requires of his disciples, that they should confess him before men; for that, otherwise, he will not confess or acknowledge them before his heavenly Father and the holy angels. But how is this to be done upon the plan of refraining from all public worship, and even from celebrating the Lord's Supper? Is there to be no outward badge or visible token of a man's being a Christian? Is he to wait till he be interrogated on the subject? The primitive Christians thought and acted very differently.

Ostentation of religion is not the vice of the present age. Mankind in general are verging to the opposite extreme. You may even attend to the whole conversation and conduct of many persons, who make profession of Christianity, and even habitually attend public worship, and, except in that single circumstance, you would not be able to discover whether they were Christians or not. How much more difficult, then, must it be to discover the Christianity of the man who does not attend Christian worship, never joining in the devotions of his fellow-Christians, either in the church, or in his family! Ostentation of religion has existed in this country, especially among the Puritans and Dissenters; but there are few traces of it to be found at present. The peculiar practices mentioned with ridicule and contempt by Mr. Wakefield, (but which I own I should look upon with respect,) I never heard of before. Why, then, so much precaution against a vice from which there is no danger? It is like directing our whole force to the defence of one side of a fortress, when the enemy is making a breach at the opposite side.

Let us consider a little what is the ground of this so much dreaded ostentation. It is a man's valuing himself on something that is uncommon; not on doing what is merely proper in itself, and simply his duty, but something more than is expected of him. But is this the case with respect to the homage we owe our Maker? Why should it be deemed a subject of ostentation to acknowledge the being and providence of God, and our obligation and subjection to him? Is this a thing so extraordinary as to afford just cause of boasting? And if I do acknowledge the being and providence of God, and should not be ashamed to profess it, if I were interrogated on the subject, where can be the impropriety of doing it in the most public, as well as in the most private manner? If I wish, as I think I ought to do, that my belief, and corresponding practice, should be known, for the sake of any influence that it may have on others, am I not under obligation to

do it in public, that my neighbours and the world may know that I do it? David thought himself bound in duty to do this "in the presence of all the people." Daniel was not content with praying in secret at the court of Babylon, but chose to pray in such a manner as to show that he was neither ashamed nor afraid to do it; and he is not blamed for his ostentation on that account.

When you have considered with attention what I have advanced in these Letters, in favor of public worship, I flatter myself you will be convinced of the reasonableness and real value of it; and not be carried away, as young persons are apt to be, with what has nothing to recommend it besides its novelty, seeming liberality, and remoteness from vulgar prejudice. Be especially upon your guard against that dislike of restraint which is peculiarly incident to youth, and suspect yourself, and suspend your determinations, when the experience of mankind is against you. An institution recommended by the constant observance of all ages and all nations, and especially all Christians, and which has never been objected to before yesterday, will probably be found to have serious uses, and certainly should not be abandoned till after a very deliberate examination.

## FAMILY WORSHIP.

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FAMILY prayer, if not of absolute necessity, is of great use in all Christian families. Dr. Hartley, one of the most judicious, as well as most pious of men, says, "I believe it may be laid down as a certain fact, that no master or mistress of a family can have a true concern for religion, or be a child of God, who does not take care to worship by family prayer. Let the observation of the fact determine." I would not choose to express myself quite in this manner, since much must be allowed for the different circumstances of families; but thus much may certainly be said with truth, — that if the practice of family prayer, or any other mode in which we give evidence to the world that we are Christians, be forborne through shame, or a compliance with the modes of the world, we have no just claim to the title and privilege of Christians, but fall under the awful sentence of Christ, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this — generation, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels."

Every practice by which we declare our belief of Christianity, such as attending Christian worship, receiving the Lord's Supper, or performing any other acknowledged Christian duty, tends to strengthen our faith, to inspire the proper spirit of the profession, and secure the performance of every duty which it enjoins; and, therefore, should by no means be neglected by us.



Thus should we be urgent, even to exhort one another, and all should gladly and thankfully receive “the word of exhortation;” to “be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labor will not be in vain in the Lord.”

The author of this epistle says, We should exhort one another “so much the more as we see the day” (meaning, no doubt, the great day, or the second coming of Christ) “approaching.” If this motive had weight in the times of the apostles, it must have more now; since that great day, which will “try every man’s work of what sort it is,” must be nearer than it was then; and though this time was not known to our Lord himself, but only the signs of its approach, many intelligent Christians, who are attentive to the signs of the times, are of opinion that it cannot now be far distant, and may be expected even in the present generation. But since the coming is certain, though the time be uncertain, let us be ready, that, when our Lord shall return and take account of his servants, we may be found without spot, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

## OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S DAY.

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IF one day in seven be appointed to be a season of rest from labor, and for serious recollection of mind, by that Being who has made us capable both of labor and of reflection, let us conscientiously appropriate this, as well as every other portion of our time, to the use for which it was intended, and for which, we may therefore presume, it is really wanted; and let us not, out of too great a dread of superstition (which ought certainly to be guarded against, in this as well as in every thing else), pass into the contrary extreme, of a gross abuse of a divine ordinance, and a scandalous licentiousness of conduct.

Works of necessity and mercy are allowed to be a sufficient reason for setting aside the distinction of the Lord's day from the rest; but that journey, for instance, cannot be said to be necessary, for which nothing but convenience can be pleaded; neither can it be necessary to confine yourselves at home by taking a medicine on that day, when your health would not suffer by its being taken on the day before, or the day after. Also a cold, or other slight indisposition, is with a very ill grace pleaded as an excuse for absence from public worship, by those who are known to run much greater risks on other accounts. I wish it were merely a matter of doubt, whether, in many cases, the plea of necessity be justly alleged, and that it could be supposed that persons acted according to their judgments, though biassed by their inclinations. But, alas! so generally, and so manifestly, is business of a nature altogether foreign to the proper design

of the Lord's day thrown into it, by many persons, that it cannot be accounted for but by supposing it to be the effect of particular design and contrivance ; which, being a wilful neglect of an acknowledged duty, certainly argues a want of the fear of God, and the absence of religious principle, properly so called.

## THE LORD'S SUPPER.

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THE Lord's supper, consisting of eating bread, and drinking wine, is a religious rite instituted by Christ, in commemoration of his death ; the breaking of the bread, more especially representing the wounding of the body of Christ, and the pouring out of the wine the shedding of his blood ; and this rite is to continue to be celebrated by the disciples of Christ till his second coming.

The design of this institution being to serve as a memorial, or record, of that important fact of the death of Christ, it may be considered as one monument of the truth of the Christian religion, as was observed in a preceding part of this work.

Being more especially a memorial of the death of Christ, in which he chiefly manifested the love that he bore to mankind, it furnishes the most proper opportunity of recollecting the love of Christ, and rejoicing in the consideration of the blessings of his gospel.

Since this rite is peculiar to Christians, it likewise serves as a public declaration of our being Christians ; and is, consequently, a recognising of the obligation we are under to live as becomes Christians : for no man can say that he is a Christian, and especially in a public and solemn manner, without acknowledging that he is obliged to live as becomes a Christian. Joining habitually in public worship, implies very much the same thing.

Lastly, as, in this rite, we more especially commemorate the death of Christ, it serves to remind us, that we are the

professed disciples of a crucified Master; and, therefore, must not expect better treatment from this world than our Lord met with from it: that we must lay our account with meeting with hardships, reproach, and persecution, as he did, and that we should contentedly and patiently bear them, rather than quit the profession of our faith, or do any thing unworthy of it; in full assurance that, if "we suffer" with Christ, "we shall also reign with him," and "be glorified together."

This rite having such excellent moral uses, and the celebration of it being an express command of Christ, who said, "Do this in remembrance of me," I do not see how any person, professing Christianity, can satisfy himself with refusing to join in it. In the primitive times, the celebration of the Lord's supper made a part of the ordinary service every Lord's day, and every person who was thought worthy to be considered as a member of a body of Christians partook of it. Whenever, indeed, any person professing Christianity behaved in a manner unworthy of the Christian name, so as to be in danger of bringing a reproach upon it, he was excommunicated; in consequence of which, he was cut off from joining in any part of Christian worship, and from this among the rest; but there was no distinction made between this and other parts of the service, especially the prayers of the church. An excommunicated person was one who was publicly declared not to belong to a Christian society: and, therefore, the church would not consent to any thing that should imply their acknowledging him in the character of a brother, and declined associating with him. The reason of this conduct was most evident; because the good name of Christians, and of Christian societies, was a thing of the greatest consequence to the propagation of Christianity in those early times; and it ought to be considered, at all times, as a matter of great consequence.

Considering that Christ absolutely requires of all his disciples the most open and public profession of his religion,



notwithstanding all the hazards to which it may expose them, and has declared, that unless we "confess him before men," he will not acknowledge us before his heavenly Father; it certainly behoves all Christians to take this, as well as every other method, of declaring, in a public manner, their profession of Christianity. Moreover, as baptism is generally administered in infancy, and is not the act of the person baptized, it seems necessary that there should be some public act, by which those who are baptized in their infancy should openly, and in their own persons, declare themselves Christians; and the most proper manner of doing this is certainly the receiving of the Lord's supper.

According to the custom of the primitive church, a custom so ancient and uncontroverted, as, with me, to carry sufficient evidence of its having been an apostolical one, all persons who are baptized, children as well as others, should receive the Lord's supper. It is nothing less than the revival of this custom that will secure a general attendance upon this ordinance; and no objection can be made to it, except what may, with equal strength, be made to bringing children to public worship at all, since they are as incapable of understanding the one as the other. Nor would this ancient and useful custom have been ever laid aside, if it had not been for the introduction of a train of superstitious notions, which made this plain and simple ordinance appear continually more mysterious and awful; till, at length, the monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation was completely established.

Indeed, it is not a little remarkable, that the custom of giving the eucharist to children, was not finally abolished in any place till that doctrine had obtained the full sanction of the church of Rome; and that it maintains its ground to this very day, in all those Christian churches which were never subject to that anti-christian power, whose spiritual usurpations and corruptions of the gospel have been immense, and have extended to almost every thing belonging to it.

Such, and so simple, is the Christian rite of the Lord's Supper. For surely, then, all who have any value for Christianity will attend upon it, as wearing the proper badge of their profession. Be the moral use of this rite more or less, or even nothing at all, yet that it was appointed to be observed by one who had a right to appoint it, viz. the Founder of our faith, cannot be questioned.

One reason why it is so much neglected, is evidently an indifference to Christianity, in consequence of which none of its ordinances will be attended upon, any farther than public decency requires. But with many this neglect is owing to a secret superstition, as if there was something peculiarly hazardous in attending upon it unworthily in consequence of the apostle Paul saying, in his account of it, that such would receive judgment to themselves; (for so it ought to be rendered, and not damnation, as in our version.) But from his account of the irregularities of the Corinthians in their celebration of this ordinance, it is evident that by *unworthily* he meant *improperly*, not distinguishing it from a common entertainment; and that by *judgment* he either simply meant *censure*, or *some temporal judgment*, with which he supposed that they were visited on that account. It has no reference whatever to the state of man after death. Our only danger arises from professing Christianity itself, without living as becomes Christians; and this obligation affects all who will call themselves Christians, whether they attend to this particular ordinance or not.

## STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

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It will be inquired by what means the influence of the world can be counteracted, or by what means a due attention to Christian principles can be well secured. I answer, the principal means to effect this great purpose, and one that will naturally lead to every other, is a familiar acquaintance with the Scriptures. The zealous Christian will make these books his constant companions. With the pious Psalmist, "his delight will be in the law of the Lord, and in his law will he meditate day and night."

Be assured that in reading the Scriptures ever so often, you will always find something new and interesting. Many difficulties you will, no doubt, meet with, as may be expected in books of such great antiquity, written, many of them, in a language which is but imperfectly understood, and abounding with allusions to customs, with which we, in this part of the world, are unacquainted, and which, being in many respects the reverse of ours, will of course appear unnatural. But new light is thrown upon things of this nature every day. Many difficulties are already cleared up in the most satisfactory manner; and in the mean time every thing of this nature may be safely neglected, or referred to farther consideration, especially if you read for the purpose of moral improvement; the greatest part of the Bible being perfectly intelligible to every capacity, and in the highest degree useful and edifying.

A familiar acquaintance with the Scriptures will preserve upon the mind a lively sense of God and his moral govern-

ment. It will continually bring into view, and give you a habit of contemplating the great plan of providence, respecting the designs of God in the creation of man, and his ultimate destination. You will by this means have a clearer view of the Divine wisdom and goodness in the government of the world, even in the most calamitous events, as in the corruption of true religion, as well as in the reformation of it. You will perceive signs of order in the present seemingly disordered state of things, and will rejoice in the prospect of the glorious completion of the scheme, in universal virtue and universal happiness. Such views of things as these, which will be perpetually suggested by the reading of the Scriptures, have the greatest tendency to ennoble and enlarge the mind, to raise our thoughts and affections above the low pursuits which wholly occupy and distract the minds of the bulk of mankind; they will inspire a most delightful serenity in the midst of the cares and troubles of life, and impart a joy which the world can neither give nor take away.

If, however, notwithstanding these recommendations, the Scriptures, and other works illustrative of their contents, have not engaged the attention, it behoves every person who really wishes to imbibe the spirit of Christianity, to make himself well acquainted with them, and to persist in the reading and study of them, till he finds himself interested in their contents, and imbibe the pious and benevolent temper which is so conspicuous in the writers. And how irksome soever, through disuse and other causes, the reading of the Scriptures, and of other books which have the same tendency, may for some time be, perseverance will overcome it; and then, if I may speak from experience, no reading will be so interesting or pleasing, and the satisfaction will increase with every fresh perusal.

This circumstance enables us to account for the peculiar pleasure that David and other pious Jews appear to have derived from reading the Scriptures. They had few other books; so that if they read at all, they must have read them

perpetually in their own houses, as well as have heard them constantly read in the synagogues, from the time that they had such places of public worship, which they certainly had from the time of the Babylonish Captivity. At this day, there are so many other books to engage the attention, that, in too many cases, they totally exclude the reading of that which is of infinitely more value than all the rest.

But whatever be the leisure that any person can command for reading, some portion of it should by all means be appropriated to that kind of reading, the object of which is to increase the knowledge which relates to our profession as Christians. And this will lead to a course of reading both curious and interesting, especially such as makes us acquainted with the progress of Christianity in the world. No kind of reading tends so much to counteract the influence of the world and its principles as the lives of eminent Christians; and most of all, the martyrs, whose piety, patience, and fortitude, in cheerfully abandoning life and every thing in it, for the sake of conscience, cannot fail to inspire something of the same excellent spirit; and this once fully imbibed, will enable a man to behave as becomes a Christian in every situation, of prosperity as well as of adversity, in life or in death.

Compared to the strong feelings with which such works as these are read by persons who have acquired a true relish for them, all other reading is perfectly insipid; and a truly pious Christian, who has few books beside the Bible, has little cause to envy the man of letters, in whose ample library the Bible is not to be found. What is there of pathetic address in all the writings of the admired ancients, compared to the Book of Deuteronomy by Moses? And what is all their poetry, compared to the Psalms of David, and some parts of Isaiah? And yet, such is the power of association and habit, that, by persons of a different education and turn of mind, those parts of Scripture which are by some read with emotions of the most exalted and pleas-

urable kind, will be perused with perfect indifference, and even disgust: and if such persons be advanced in life, so that their habits are confirmed, the endeavour to communicate to them a relish for such writings, will be altogether in vain. Of such persons we may say with Bacon's brazen statue, Time is past.

So strongly is my mind impressed with a sense of the importance of the habitual reading of the Scriptures, both from considering the nature of the thing, and from the best attention that I have been able to give to particular characters and facts; that I do not see how those persons who neglect it, and who have no satisfaction in habitually meditating on the infinitely important subjects to which they relate, can be said to have any thing of Christianity besides the name. They cannot feel the influence of its doctrines, its precepts, or its motives, when they give no attention to them; and, therefore they cannot derive any advantage from Christianity, except such as accrues to all the nominally Christianized part of the world, in improving the general character, manners and customs of it; but which, as it has not arisen from any attention that they have given to it, cannot entitle them to the character or rewards of true Christians; such as those who have lived as pilgrims and strangers here below, and as citizens of heaven; who, though living in the world, have had their affections on things above; whose treasure, the object of their chief care and pursuit, has been not in the things of this world, but in heaven. They may not be rejected by Christ as workers of iniquity, but they have no title to the appellation of good and faithful servants to a Master whom they have never truly loved or respected, and hardly even thought of; and, therefore, cannot expect to partake in the joy of their Lord.



## THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

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HE only is justly entitled to the honorable appellation of a Christian who postpones every thing else to it, and who sets no value upon any thing else when set in competition with it.

Whether this be our case, will appear by the share that Christianity has in our thoughts. Whatever it be that a man chiefly values, he oftenest thinks of; and if his attention be called off to other things, it will be detained no longer than is necessary. His favorite object, whatever it be, will perpetually recur to his mind, and it will not be in the power of any thing to exclude it long.

We may judge of this by the attention which men of the world give to riches in general, or to any particular estate they may wish to purchase, or by the attention which a person of a scientific turn of mind gives to his favorite objects, whether it be collecting what he thinks curious, or investigating what he thinks important; it will chiefly occupy his thoughts. Now a Christian may attend to these things, and many others, (for the occasions and business of life are various, and no one object, though the greatest, can possess the mind always,) but with him every thing of this kind, and the world itself, which contains them all, will be of no more than secondary consideration. They occupy and amuse him for a time, but he abandons them without regret when his more favorite business and pleasure call him. So much was the mind of pious David occupied with a sense of God, his providence, and religion in general, that he says the law of God

was his meditation day and night; and he frequently mentions the pleasure he took in thinking of God in the night watches, whenever he could not sleep. Till this be our case, we cannot be said to have attained a proper habitual devotion.

Now, such is the unavoidable influence of the world around us, that this state of mind is not to be attained without many efforts, or a course of discipline, in which the mind must be at first constrained to look off from the things of time to those of eternity. But repeated acts will at length beget any habit. And when, by this means, we shall come habitually to set our affections on things above, where Christ is at the right hand of God, our most pleasing meditations, the subjects to which our minds will naturally revert when no other shall be particularly pressing for attention, will be those which relate to religion. Something concerning God, or concerning Christ and the gospel, will first present themselves, and be uppermost in our thoughts; and whenever they are diverted to other objects (which is unavoidably the case in the usual business and commerce of the world,) they will recur with double strength and pleasure. It will be like the sight of a friend after a short absence.

Indeed, we make quicker advances in the divine life, as it may properly be called, by means of these intervals, in which the mind is occupied by the cares, or even the innocent pleasures, of life, than when we endeavour always to preserve a frame of direct devotion: for then, like the perpetual presence of the nearest friend, it would become dull and insipid. That generous, invigorating ardor, which is experienced by men of true piety, who mix with the world and exert themselves to be useful in it, is unknown to the professed devotee, who abstracts himself from the world, in order, as he thinks, to give himself wholly to God. This frame of fervent devotion advances like the tide in the ocean, with intervals of recess between each flow. In this, I am confident, that I speak to the experience of all who cultivate a habit of devotion, and who attend to their own feelings.

## THE NOMINAL CHRISTIAN.

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THE real difference between a merely nominal believer and an unbeliever is very small, and of little consequence, compared to the difference between the merely nominal and the real Christian. What are the generality of Christians, in what are called Christian countries? They are, in fact, persons who mind nothing but their business, or their pleasure, without giving any attention to the principles of Christianity at all. It is by no means the subject of their daily thoughts, it supplies no motives to their actions, it contributes nothing to moderate their joys, or to alleviate their sorrows. It neither enables them to bear the troubles of life, nor does it give them any solid hope in death. Whereas the real Christian, as the apostle says, "rejoices as though he rejoiced not and weeps as though he wept not, because the fashion of this world passeth away," and the Lord is at hand. He is ever "looking to that blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of the great God, and his Saviour Jesus Christ;" and has peace and joy in believing.

Christianity is less to be considered as a system of opinions, than a rule of life. But of what signification is a rule, if it be not complied with? All the doctrines of Christianity have for their object Christian morals, which are no other than the well-known duties of life; and the advantage we derive from this religion is, that the principles of it assist us in maintaining that steady regard to the providence and moral government of God, and to a future state, which facilitates and ensures the practice of those duties; inspiring greater piety

towards God, greater benevolence to man, and that heavenly mindedness which raises the heart and affections above those mean and low pursuits which are the source of almost all vices. But Christian principles not reflected upon or attended to, cannot be accompanied with any advantage of this kind ; and better, surely, were it to make no profession of any principles, than to live without a due regard to them. Better, therefore, were it for any person to be an unbeliever in Christianity, than to be a Christian, and live as if he had not been one. He deprives himself of all apology or excuse for his bad conduct. And it would, I fear, be happy for thousands of professing Christians, if they had been born and lived among heathens.

We cannot too much impress upon our minds, that religion of any kind is only a mean to a certain end, and that this end is good conduct in life. Consequently, if this end be not attained, we not only lose the advantage of the means, or instrument, of which we were possessed, but are chargeable with the guilt of such neglect, are guilty of an ungrateful contempt of the means that were afforded us for the greatest and best of purposes ; and can we expect that this will go unpunished ?

## THE CHRISTIAN IN THE WORLD.

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CHRISTIANITY does not operate as a charm. The use of it does not resemble that of a badge, or a certificate, to entitle a man to any privilege. It is of no use but so far as it enters into the sentiments, contributes to form the habits, and directs the conduct of men; and to do this, it must really occupy the mind, and engage its closest attention: so that the maxims of it may instantly occur the moment that they are called for; and therefore in whatever it be that the true Christian and the mere man of the world really differ, the difference could not fail to appear. If there was any gratification or pursuit, that did not suit the Christian character, though others might indulge in it without scruple, and despise all who did not; the true Christian would be unmoved by such examples, or such ridicule. His habitual fear of God, and his respect for the commands of Christ, would at all times render him superior to any such influence. Whatever his Christian principles called him to do, or to suffer, he would be at all times ready to obey the call.

For any principles to have their practical influence, they must at least be familiar to the mind, and this they cannot be unless they be voluntarily cherished there, and be dwelt upon with pleasure, when other objects do not necessarily obtrude themselves. Consider, then, how many objects are perpetually occupying the minds of men in the present state of things in the Christian world, and how forcible their hold is upon them, and consequently, how difficult it must be to prevent their all-prevailing influence, to the exclusion of that of Christianity.

The age in which we live, more than any that have preceded it, may be said to be the age of trade and commerce. Great wealth is chiefly to be acquired by this means. It is, at least, the most expeditious way of acquiring a fortune, with any regard to the principles of honor and honesty. But to succeed to any great extent in mercantile business of any kind, especially now that such numbers of active and sensible men are engaged in the same, a man must give almost his whole attention to it, so that there will be little room for any thing else to occupy his mind. If he do not literally, in the language of Scripture "rise up early," and "sit up late," it will occupy his thoughts when his head is upon his pillow. His anxiety will often keep him awake. Even at that season of rest he will be considering whether it will be prudent to make this or that purchase, whether this or that man may be safely trusted, whether there will not be too much hazard in this or that undertaking, and a thousand things of this nature.

If such a person's business allow him any leisure he is fatigued, and wants amusement, and cannot bear any thing that makes him serious. He therefore engages in parties of pleasure, and various entertainments, that, even more than business, exclude all thoughts of religion. And in this course of alternate business and mere amusement or feasting, do many men of business proceed day after day, and year after year, till Christianity is as foreign to their thought as if they had been heathens.

If the man of business have any turn for reading, and that not for mere amusement, it is history, or politics, something relating to the topics of the day, but not the Bible that he reads. To this, if he have not read at school, many a man of business is an utter stranger; and though in this book, God himself speaks to men, concerning their most important interests, their duties here, and their expectations hereafter, they will not listen even to their Maker. On Sundays, which the laws of most Christian countries prevent men from giving to business, many never go to any place of Christian



worship ; but to relieve themselves from the fatigues of the week, make that their day of regular excursion, in company with persons of similar occupations ; and their conversation, if not irreligious and profane, is at least on topics altogether foreign to religion.

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The times in which we live may, in a very remarkable degree, be said to be the age of politics, and, from the very extraordinary state of the world, it is in some degree necessarily so. Greater events are now depending than any that the history of any former age can show ; and the theory and practice of the internal government of countries, the circumstances that tend to make governments stable, and the people prosperous and happy, concerning which there is endless room for difference of opinion, occupy the thoughts of all men who are capable of any reflection. No person can even read the common newspaper, or see any mixed company, without entering into them. He will, of course, form his own opinion of public men and public measures ; and if they be different from those of his neighbours, the subjects will be discussed, and sometimes without that temper which the discussion of all subjects of importance requires. Consequently, the subject of politics, in the present state of things, is with many as much an enemy to religion as trade and commerce, or any other pursuit by which men gain a livelihood. Many persons who read, find nothing that interests them but what relates to the events of the time or the politics of the day.

This state of things might lead men to look to the hand of God, and a particular providence, which is evidently bringing about a state of things far exceeding in magnitude and importance, any thing that the present or any former generation of men has seen. And a person of an habitually pious disposition, who regards the hand of God in every thing, will not take up a newspaper without reflecting that he is going to see what God has wrought ; and considering what it is that he is apparently about to work. To him, whatever wishes he

may, from his imperfect view of things, indulge himself in, (which, however, will always be with moderation and submission,) all news is good news. Every event that has actually taken place, as it could not have been without the permission (which is in fact the appointment) of God, he is persuaded is that which was most fit and proper for the circumstances, and will lead to the best end; and though for the present it may be calamitous, the final issue, he cannot doubt, will be happy.

But mere men of the world look no farther than to men, though they are no more than instruments in the hand of God; and consequently, as the events are pleasing or displeasing to them, promising or unpromising, their hopes and fears, their affections or dislikes, are excited to the greatest degree; so as often to banish all tranquillity of mind and cool reflection. And certainly, a mind in this state is not the proper seat of religion and devotion. All the thoughts of such persons are engaged, and their whole minds are occupied by objects, which not only exclude Christianity, but such as inspire a temper the very reverse of that of a Christian, which is peculiarly meek, benevolent, even to enemies, and heavenly-minded, — a disposition of mind which we should in vain look for in the eager politician of these times.

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In this state of things can we wonder at the progress of infidelity? Those who are entire strangers to it, see that it has little influence on the hearts and lives of those with whom they converse; so that whether it be true or false, they think it to be of little consequence, and not worth the trouble of a serious investigation. And many persons who had nominally Christian parents, giving no more serious attention to Christianity than they see their parents and others give to it; observing none of its exercises, or only in the most superficial manner; seldom attending public worship; never reading the Scriptures, or any book relating to religion, either explaining its evidences, or enforcing its duties, which they find to interfere with their inclinations, get a dislike to the

subject ; and in this state of mind a mere cavil or a jest, such as are to be found in the writings of Voltaire and other modern unbelievers, has the force of argument. With many persons, too, in the upper ranks of life, Christianity being the belief of the common people, on whom they look down with contempt, has more weight in their rejection of it than they will acknowledge, or than they may even be aware of themselves.

Now, as I observed before, Christianity, though not absolutely and expressly rejected, is of no use, unless it influence the temper of our minds and our conduct in life ; if it lays no restraint on the love of pleasure, the love of gain, or the pursuits of ambition, but leaves men as worldly-minded in all respects as those who never heard of it ; as much as if they had never heard of that future state which is brought to light by it, and which in the gospel is held up as a constant and most interesting object of attention and contemplation, to all Christians. We should never forget that religion is only a means to a certain end ; and if we do not make this use of it, it would have been better for us never to have had it, or to have known it ; since, then, we should have had one talent less than we now have to be accountable for. And if it be true that God has revealed his will to men, and sent messenger after messenger to promote the virtue and happiness of his rational offspring, he knew that such an extraordinary dispensation was necessary for us, and we cannot be innocent if we neglect to attend to it, and to make the proper use of it ; unless we be so situated as never to have heard of it.

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And certainly it requires no small degree of fortitude and resolution to appear so singular, as a sincere and zealous Christian must sometimes do, among persons of a different character. He must be content to be thought righteous over much ; to be considered as a man of a weak mind, and devoid of spirit, and of those qualities which recommend men to the admiration of the world. For though virtue, as it is commonly understood, has the sanction of general estimation, and

persons accounted vicious are universally censured, the virtues that are most admired are not always Christian virtues, and give more indulgence to the passions, (as to those of revenge, and a love of what is called pleasure, of various kinds,) than Christianity allows. And there is not perhaps any vice besides that of a mean selfishness, that is equally condemned by Christianity and the voice of the world. We see that even murder, in the form of a duel, passes without any censure at all. Nay, the spirit with which men fight duels is applauded; while the meekness, though it be real magnanimity, showing a due command of temper, which overlooks insults, and preserves a kindness for those who offer them, is branded as meanness of spirit. Voluptuousness to a really criminal excess passes with so light a censure, that, when any person is said to be no man's enemy but his own, he is not thought at all the worse of on that account, especially as it is often accompanied with a contempt of money, and a love of society like his own. Profaneness is too generally considered as no vice at all, but only, at the worst, a foolish and unmeaning custom.

In these circumstances, a profound reverence for the name and attributes of God, the great duty of not living to ourselves, but of the appropriation of the whole of a man's time, fortune, and ability of every kind to the good of others, the love of God with the whole heart, and our neighbour as ourselves, including in the word *neighbour* every person to whom it is in our power to render any service; the obligation of sacrificing every thing in life, and even life itself, for the sake of conscience, in the cause of truth and right, with a view to a recompence, not in this world, but another, which Christianity requires of us; are things quite above the comprehension of mankind in general. And whatever men cannot attain themselves, they think to be romantic and absurd, a kind of Quixotism in morals, and a just object of ridicule and contempt.

Since, then, what is called *the world*, and the prevailing maxims and customs of the times in which we live, give us no assistance, but must operate as an impediment in our

Christian course, we must surmount this great difficulty by our own voluntary exertions, taking to our aid those helps by which Christian principles are most effectually impressed and kept in view. Something of this kind is absolutely necessary, because no end can be gained without employing the proper means; and if any thing that does not necessarily obtrude itself, requires to be attended to, it must be purposely brought before the mind by reflection, reading, or conversation; to do this most effectually, some time must be set apart for the purpose. Also those intervals of time which are not engaged by necessary business, should not be wholly given to mere amusement, (though something of this kind is necessary for such beings as we are,) but be employed to some serious purpose.

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If, then, we call ourselves Christians, we must ever bear in mind, that, though we live in the world, that is, with men, who have no views or prospects beyond it, whose chief pursuits are riches, honors, or pleasures, — these are but secondary things for us. We are to receive them thankfully, and above all, to improve them properly, if, in the course of Divine Providence, they fall to our lot; but we are, at the same time, to be always looking beyond them to a more enduring substance, to a treasure in heaven, to honors that are unfading, which come from God and not from man, and to that pleasure which is at his right hand for evermore, accompanied with that inward satisfaction of mind, which always attends the possession of a good conscience. And we ought ever to be ready even to renounce all the advantages, honors, and pleasures of the world, when they come in competition with our duty, and our obedience to the commands of Christ. We must not hold even life itself so dear to us, as that we should not be ready to part with it (and, in whatever manner those who in this world have the power over life shall please) rather than make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. If in the hour of trial we deny Christ, he will also deny us.



It is much easier to preserve these just views of the object and end of our profession in an openly hostile, than in a seemingly friendly world, from the constant opposition of principles and objects in the former circumstances. In this case, that is, in a state of persecution, whether we voluntarily attend to it or not, we cannot help seeing, and reflecting continually, that this world is not our home. While we preserve the profession of our faith uncorrupted, and while we retain our integrity in asserting that faith, without any of those unworthy artifices, whereby too many evade the consequences of a frank and open declaration of their real principles, we see there is no state of enjoyment or repose to be looked for here; and we therefore naturally, and indeed necessarily, look forward to "that rest which yet remaineth for the people of God," where alone "the wicked cease from troubling." In this situation we want no motives to cultivate that temper and disposition of mind, which alone can qualify us for the happiness of that heavenly state.

But when the world is not apparently hostile to us, it is most of all truly so. For then it is, that, not being molested by the world, at the same time that we are subject to the influence of it, being "men of like passions with others," the same things that strike others, strike us. By mixing with the world and sharing the emoluments of it, we naturally become fond of them, and attached to them; and with certain limits this is unavoidable and not amiss. But is it in human nature, without particular efforts with ourselves, to which the bulk of mankind are much averse, to keep within the bounds of moderation, and not to become too much attached to the world, and those things of it which are foreign to our main object and ultimate views? Living with the world, we naturally live as the world does, and become gradually, in all respects, like the world; and the great objects of our Christian profession, being too long kept out of sight, lose their influence, and we are in danger of abandoning the pursuit of them altogether.



## RELIGIOUS USE OF THE WORLD.

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THE world in which we live, with all the influences to which we are subject, may be equally our friend or our enemy, according to the use we make of it. It is wonderfully adapted, by the exercise it gives to our faculties, and to our passions and affections, to establish, strengthen, and settle us in the habit and practice of all virtue, and to raise us to a pitch of excellence to which Adam in paradise could never have attained; but then it is equally possible that, by sloth and indulgence, we may debase our natures to a degree equally wonderful. The knowledge and belief of Christianity itself, as well as every other advantage of which we are possessed, is also capable either of promoting the moral perfection of our natures, and our fitness for immortal happiness, or of making us the proper objects of a greater condemnation than that of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment.

It behoves us, then, to consider our situation and all our privileges very attentively, that we may make the best use of them. It is not in our option to be in any other circumstances than those in which our Maker has placed us. It will also avail us nothing to hide any talent in a napkin. As we have received it, we must give an account of the use we make of it.

We are likewise ignorant of the time when this account will be called for; and great and serious as the business of life is, the time allowed for the despatch of it is both short and uncertain; but though short, it is sufficient for the pur-

pose of it, if it be rightly improved ; and then the uncertainty of its duration is a circumstance that does not need to give us any concern. “ At such an hour as we think not, the Judge may come ; ” but then, “ blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching.”

## CHRISTIANITY ELEVATES THE CHARACTER.

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CHRISTIANITY is the last dispensation of God to mankind ; and it doth not seem possible, that more ample provision should be made to enlarge the views and comprehension of the human mind, in order to fix its attention upon great and remote objects, and raise it above the influence of present and temporary things.

A true Christian, like his great Master, is not of this world, but a citizen of heaven. He considers himself as a stranger and pilgrim here below, and lives by faith, and not by sight. Let him be ever so poor and despised here, he looks upon himself as an heir of immortal glory and felicity, of an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him. He may see his body decaying with old age, wasting with a disorder, or mangled with torture, and every way at the mercy of his enraged persecutors ; but he rejoices in the firm belief and expectation of its rising again incorruptible at the last day, and that when Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, shall appear, he also shall appear with him in glory.

What an elevation of thought and sentiment is here ! How must this faith make us overcome the world, and render us superior to its allurements or its threats ! With this enlarged comprehension of mind, which brings the future consequences of his actions into immediate prospect, it is impossible that a sincere Christian should live addicted to vicious gratifications and pursuits, which he must see to be destructive of these his animating hopes ; and he must

necessarily grow more in love with that temper and conduct which is, with the greatest propriety, called Christian, and which ensures to him these glorious expectations. As He who has called him to these great privileges is holy, so will he also be holy in all manner of conversation. It will be his daily endeavour to cultivate that holiness of heart and life, without which, he is sensible, no man can see the Lord. With this hope set before him, all the afflictions of this present life will seem light, trifling, and not worthy to be named with, but will be absolutely lost in the consideration of, that eternal weight of glory which awaits his patient continuance in well-doing.

This superiority to present and temporary things, which is attained by truly Christian principles, is of the most rational nature, being of the same kind with that which is acquired by experience, and which necessarily results from the structure of our minds, and the circumstances in which Divine Providence has placed us in this world: for it is only perfecting the association of those ideas which have a real connexion, and uniting in our minds the several parts of one whole, and things which nothing but time separates. If it be compared with that kind of superiority which might be acquired by other principles, those of the Stoics, for instance, its advantage will appear to be exceedingly great.

The Stoic affects to despise pain, because, according to his arbitrary definition of things, it cannot be called an *evil*, and does not depend upon himself. Having imagined, though without any ground, that every man's happiness must, in any case, arise from himself (in exclusion even of the Divine Being,) he thinks it absurd to complain of any thing which he could not help. Complaint implies a sense of unhappiness; and this, according to his hypothesis, can never take place without his own consent. If his wife or child be in the most dreadful agonies, he looks, or affects to look, on their condition with the greatest tranquillity and the most unfeeling indifference, satisfied that sickness and

pain are not in the catalogue of things within his power, and that the sufferers themselves are not unhappy, since misfortunes are unavoidable, and he knew that his wife or child were not naturally exempt from them. When he dies, he expects that his soul, being a particle detached from the Universal Mind, will be absorbed in it again, and that his separate consciousness will be lost for ever.

These are the great outlines of the famous philosophical system of Zeno, which is said to have made so many great men; but it has certainly no foundation in nature. The principles of it can never have been really felt, and all the boasted effects of it must have arisen from conceit and obstinacy.

How differently, and how much more naturally, does the Christian think and act in the cases above mentioned! He does not pretend to deny the evidence of his senses, nor has recourse to whimsical distinctions; and, not having maintained that pain is no evil, he finds himself under no necessity of behaving as if he was unaffected by it. He owns that present sufferings are not joyous, but grievous; but he still thinks them nothing in comparison with the glory that shall be revealed, and therefore he endures patiently for righteousness' sake, in a firm belief of being more than recompensed for them at the resurrection of the just. If his friends be in distress, he has no principles that lead him to check, but, on the other hand, such as encourage him freely to indulge his natural sympathy with them; and these feelings will certainly prompt him to exert himself to the utmost in their favor. At the same time, he will not fail to exhort his friends to the duties of Christian patience and fortitude, inculcating the great Christian doctrine of the transitoriness of this world, and its subserviency to another. When he dies, he indulges no extravagant, but really uncomfortable conceit, about being absorbed in the Divine Mind; but believes that he shall, in his own person, rise again from the dead, when he shall resume and retain his own separate

consciousness, live again under the government of that God whose goodness he has experienced and whose friendship he has secured, know all his virtuous friends once more, and rejoice with them through all eternity.

If we consider the principles of morals in the heathen world, we shall see the manifest advantage there is over it in the plan of revelation. The views of the heathens upon this subject were exceedingly confined, and did not require that comprehension of mind which is necessary to the practice of those duties that were enjoined both in the Jewish and Christian systems. The great duties of piety, consisting in the fear and love of God, and a cheerful reliance on his providence, were, in a manner, unknown in ancient times beyond the boundaries of Judea. And what can more evidently tend to enlarge the comprehension and faculties of the human mind, than the regards which are due to the Maker and Governor of the world ?

While the attention of the heathens was wholly engrossed by sensible things, those who were favored with Divine revelation, even in its most imperfect state, were engaged in the contemplation of their invisible Author. They considered the enjoyments of life as the effects of his bounty, and all the events of it as taking place according to the wise appointment of his providence. Thus was the power of association enabled to present to their minds the ideas of great and remote objects, by which their sentiments were influenced and their conduct directed. By this means, limited as were the views of the ancient patriarchs, their conceptions were far more enlarged, and consequently their minds more intellectual, than those of the gentile world.

It is true that all the heathens were prone to superstition, and that a great number of their actions were influenced by regards to invisible agents ; but (not to say, what is very probable, that their religion was, in this respect, a corruption of the patriarchal) all the gods they had any idea of, at least all with whom they maintained any intercourse, were



local and territorial divinities, liable to the influence of low and vulgar passions, and limited in their powers and operations. It was not possible, therefore, that their theology should suggest such sublime ideas, as must have been conceived by the Jews, from the perusal of the books of Moses; in which we find the idea of one God, the Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, who established and who controls the laws of nature, and who superintends the affairs of the whole world, giving the kingdoms of it to whomsoever he pleases; a Being of unspotted purity, and a friend and protector of all good men. So far were the notions which the gentiles entertained of their gods below the conceptions of the Jews, concerning their Jehovah, the Lord of heaven and earth, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, destroying their enemies in the Red Sea, and feeding them with bread from heaven for the space of forty years; that they could hardly have had any ideas to some of the finest expressions which occur in the sacred books of the Jews, as, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" and many others, which express sentiments of the most pure and exalted devotion.

If any people have exalted and sublime ideas, they are sure to be found in their poetry; but how poor and low is the sacred poetry of the heathens in comparison with the Psalms of David! The poems of Homer, of Hesiod, or of Callimachus in honor of the Grecian gods, can hardly be read without laughter; but the book of Psalms (the greatest part of which were written long before the works of any of those Grecian poets, and by persons who had travelled and seen far less than they had done) cannot be read without the greatest seriousness, and are still capable of exciting sentiments of the warmest and most exalted, and yet the most perfectly rational devotion. They give us the most sublime ideas of the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of God. This difference between the poetry of the Jews and the Greeks, in favor of the former, is so great, that I

think it cannot be accounted for without the supposition of Divine communications. In point of genius, the Greeks seem to have been evidently superior, and they were certainly possessed of the art of composition in much greater perfection.

Whence, then, could arise so manifest an inferiority in this respect? It must have been because the Jewish theology gave that nation ideas of a Being infinitely superior to themselves, the contemplation of which, with that of his works and of his providence, would tend to improve and exalt their faculties; whereas, the heathen theology gave them no ideas of beings much superior to the race of man. In general, the gods of the Greeks and Romans were supposed to have been mere men, beings of the same rank and condition with themselves; and, though their powers were supposed to be enlarged upon their deification, their passions and morals were not at all improved, but continued just the same as before, so that their greater powers were employed about the gratification of the lowest appetites. This theology, therefore, could not infuse that noble enthusiasm which was inspired by the Jewish religion, but must rather have tended to debase their faculties.

That extensive and perfect benevolence, which is so strongly inculcated in the New Testament, implies more enlarged sentiments, and greater perfection of the intellectual faculties, than that more limited benevolence, which is treated of by the heathen moralists, which was hardly ever thought to extend farther than to a love of one's own countrymen, and which admitted slaves to none of the privileges of men, but considered them as no other than the property of their masters. But, in the eye of a Christian, Jew and Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free, are all equal. The boasted attachments of private friendship are not more endearing than that mutual love which Christ recommends to his disciples. But, whereas private friendship was, with the Greeks and Romans, the perfection and almost the end of all virtue, the brotherly love of Christians is only considered

as a branch of a more extensive benevolence, and leads to the love of all the human race.

It is evident that the duties of contentment, trust in Divine Providence, meekness, patience, forbearance and forgiveness of injuries, are more insisted on by Christ and his apostles, than by any of the heathen philosophers; and these virtues certainly require a greater comprehension of mind than any other social duties. Children are quick in their resentments, their anger is presently excited, and they are unable to conceal what little malice or revenge they are capable of; but in proportion as men advance in age, in experience, and consequently in intellect, they are able to overlook affronts, and to suspend, or wholly to stifle their resentments; because they are able to take in more distant consequences of passions and actions; and the sentiments which are suggested by these extensive views, moderate and overpower those which are prompted by their present sensations.

Christianity, therefore, by extending these duties, supposes, and thereby favors and promotes a still greater advance in intellectual perfection. To act like a Christian, a man must be possessed of true greatness of mind, a self-command, fortitude, or magnanimity, which is infinitely more superior to the disguised revenge of which some are capable, and which they can brood over for years, than this is superior to the quick resentments of children. It requires a more just knowledge of things, more experience, and more foresight.

Thus does the Christian scheme appear to be perfectly consonant to nature. It supposes a series of dispensations, in which the human mind is operated upon, and its improvement promoted in a manner analogous to that in which it is actually operated upon, and its improvement promoted every day. As the one, therefore, is conducted according to the ordinary providence of the Divine Being, the other is what might be expected from his extraordinary dispensations. Both these schemes have the same great object in view, and in both of them the same end is gained by the same methods.

## THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER, HOW FORMED.

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SUCH is the importance of religion (being, in fact, the great business of human life), and such the fascination of the cares of this world, that it behoves us to be continually upon our guard, lest the scenes through which we must necessarily pass, draw off our attention from things of infinitely more moment, though more distant; and thus the great end and purpose of our being be sacrificed to what is merely accidental or instrumental to it.

It is our consolation, however, that almost all our difficulties in the conduct of life, as it respects futurity, have no other source than want of *attention of mind* to the subject. For, so absolutely inconsiderable are the things of this life, in comparison with that which is to succeed it, that even an imperfect apprehension of the nature of our situation (if, in consequence of being sufficiently impressed and attended to, it be allowed to have its proper influence on our minds) would be sufficient to keep us in the path of our duty. But without attention and consideration, no motives, however just and weighty, can have any effect.

In reality, men miscarry, and miss the great end of their being, only in consequence of acting *precipitately*, and without attending to the necessary consequences of their actions. In other words, it is when they act *irrationally*, like brute beasts, governed by mere appetite and passion. And when they act in this manner, is it to be wondered at, that they do not attain the proper happiness of rational and intelligent beings?

It is with great propriety, therefore, that faith is represented in the Scriptures as the great principle of the Christian life; that it was by faith, or in consequence of a firm belief in futurity, depending upon the promise of God, that all the worthies of the Old Testament were enabled to distinguish themselves as they did; and that it is still by faith that we Christians are to overcome the world.

Now this efficacious faith is not a single act, or effort of the mind, or a simple conviction that a future event will take place, (for then every man who, if he were interrogated, would answer that he was a Christian, would be a good man,) but it is such a full persuasion of mind, and such a lively apprehension of a distant event, as shall give it its just influence, the same that it would have near at hand; and this can only be acquired by frequent attention to it, and meditation upon it.

Could this great end be attained, were truly Christian principles and prospects sufficiently impressed on our minds, it would be impossible for us to be guilty of any base or criminal action; and the great motives to the love of God and of our fellow-creatures, not being counteracted by any foreign influence, but having their natural and uncontroled effect upon the mind, we should “love the Lord our God with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves.” And when those governing principles had taken deep root in our minds, they would lead to the practice of the whole of our duty; and, our hearts and affections being engaged, every thing right and good would be easy and pleasant to us.

If these maxims be true, a great deal must be done by a man before he can be a Christian in the proper sense of the word, that is, “not in name and profession only, but in deed and in truth;” because a habit and temper is to be formed, which can only be produced by the long continuance of proper actions. A truly Christian character is not to be formed but by a course of discipline and exercise, calculated to keep the mind continually impressed with a lively sense of the



great truths of Christianity ; so as to overpower the influence of the objects which surround us, and which are continually soliciting our attention.

If there be any one error in religion more dangerous in its tendency than others, it is the opinion which, in some form or other (and it is capable of endless modifications) has existed almost from the commencement of Christianity, viz. that religion properly so called, or that which renders a man acceptable in the sight of God, and fits him for heaven, is not a habit or disposition of mind, such as I have now mentioned, which evidently requires time and care to form ; but some single act, or effort, whether proceeding from a man's self, or from God.

If this be the case, the whole may commence and terminate in the shortest space of time, and it may as well take place at the last hour of life, as at any other. Consequently, in the prospect of this, men may continue to live in sin, secretly flattering themselves with the hope of a late but effectual repentance. But if repentance consist of a change of disposition and conduct, it is not even possible that a late, or what we call a death-bed, repentance, can be an effectual one. For true repentance can only take place in consequence of just views of things, sufficiently impressed upon the mind by careful reflection ; and since it is not a momentary operation, but a fixed character that is wanted, it is, in reality, but very little that can be done at any one particular time.

A man, for instance, may at any time resolve to change his conduct ; but that does not amount to an actual change. He may perform any single action ; but a single action, though it may lead to, does not constitute a habit ; and even a habit, or course of actions, must be continued a considerable time before it can be quite easy and familiar to him, so that his heart and affections shall be engaged in it ; and then only is the character properly formed. Again, this character, arising from a fixed attachment of mind to our duty, ad-



mits of degrees ; for it may be a very weak or a very strong attachment ; and our future reward will be in proportion to the strength and confirmed state of all our good habits and dispositions : for, as great as is the diversity of human characters in this life, it is probable that the justice and wisdom of God will provide as great a diversity in their future retribution.

Besides, the opinion that the great business of religion is the work of a moment, unavoidably subjects men to the grossest and most fatal delusions. Indeed, how can it be otherwise, when the thing to be attained passes wholly within a man's own breast, and is generally spoken of as a thing that is incapable of verbal description ; the consequence of which must be, that persons of a warm imagination will presume, on any insignificant emotion, that they have experienced this happy change, and valuing themselves upon it, will be apt to condemn and despise the rest of the world ; while persons of a timid disposition will be tormented with doubts and despair. Not being content to judge of their hearts by their lives, they will be perpetually seeking for something that no man in his sober senses ever imagined he had found.

All the representations which are given by our Saviour of the effect of the gospel, either in the hearts of individuals, or in the world at large, (which correspond to one another,) give us the idea of something that has a gradual progress, and no where of a sudden instantaneous effect. Thus we find it compared to seed sown in the ground, to a small quantity of leaven, to laboring in a vineyard, &c. all of which require a considerable time before a sensible effect is produced.

The doctrines of the gospel, though established by miracles, did not produce their effect on the minds of men by a miraculous, but by a natural power. Indeed, external miracles would have been superfluous upon this scheme ; since God, by internal miracles only, might have converted the

whole world. The gospel had that effect, and that only, which the ground on which it was sown admitted. The new views which it opened to mankind induced most of those who were convinced that it was of God, to come to a resolution to change their former conduct; but neither could their mere belief of Christianity, nor their consequent resolution, actually profit them, till it had time to bring forth the proper fruits of it, viz. good works and a change of character. And when men did thus become Christians, still the apostles never ceased urging them, not only to act up to their profession, but to go on to perfection, comparing the Christian course to a race, or other exercise, which required the greatest and most unremitted exertion of all their powers.

If I be asked How this end is to be attained, or, in the language of the apostle, how we must gird up the loins of our minds, by what means is this lively and efficacious faith in the great practical principles of religion to be acquired? I answer, with Paul, that faith comes by hearing; supposing the consequence of hearing to be believing, and that believing operates as it ought to do: for it naturally arises from giving sufficient attention of mind to the evidence on which our faith rests, and from frequent meditation on the objects of our faith; and it cannot be produced by any other means.

## THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER NOT APPRECIATED BY THE WORLD.

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NOTWITHSTANDING this state of outward rest, and though no person is directly persecuted for being a Christian, yet the strict profession of Christianity is, in reality, at all times in a state of persecution. The world in general is but nominally Christian, and perhaps will never be wholly otherwise: for the great bulk of mankind, even in countries termed Christian, have other objects than Christianity, and, indeed, think very little about it. In consequence of this, a true Christian, one who values his religion as he ought to do, who feels as he ought to feel, and who acts as he ought to act, will be regarded with dislike. His conduct will be a reproach to that of others, and he will never be caressed like a man whose virtue is of a more pliable kind, and who can accommodate himself to the prevailing taste.

To a certain degree, the principles of honor, integrity, and benevolence, will always be admired, and make a man esteemed. But that kind of honor, and that kind of generosity which the world most admires, is very consistent with many things with which a true Christian cannot comply. The common hero of our stage is by no means a Christian character. And let a Christian behave in a manner the farthest from stiffness and moroseness, his sentiments are so elevated, compared with those of mere men of business or pleasure, that they cannot long accord together; and the latter being the more numerous will be able to keep themselves in countenance, and will regard others with aversion and disgust. Now the man who is so much a Christian as to be unmoved

by this contempt of the world, and who can bear to be ridiculed for his principles at present, would, I doubt not, be able to die for them.

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The influence of the world, pleasure, ambition, and emolument, being the same upon the human mind that it ever was, it must produce the same characters. Consequently, we must not be surprised, if there should be the very temper of the Scribes and Pharisees of our Saviour's time, in the rulers of Christian nations, and at the head of Christian establishments. On the other hand, as Christianity was by our Saviour compared to a net, which took in fishes of all kinds, good and bad, we may expect that (as in that early age) the profession of Christianity, and even in time of persecution, will not always purify the mind ; but that there will be some unworthy characters in all Christian churches. At the same time, therefore, that we justly guard against others, let us look well to ourselves.

## THE CHRISTIAN READY TO SUFFER FOR HIS FAITH.

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THIS, you may say, was requisite in the circumstances in which the apostle wrote, Christianity being then in a state of persecution, which no person retaining the profession of it could avoid; but now that the church is at rest from persecution, those sufferings are no longer necessary, and we may be, at this day, as good Christians without any hardships, as in those days they who were exposed to them could be.

I am far from saying that this is not possible; but many persons, I fear, deceive themselves by this view of things, and imagine that much less is now necessary to make a Christian than really is so. Whereas, the terms on which we become Christians (and, of course, become entitled to the rewards of Christianity in a future world) are the very same that they ever were, and, upon the whole, perhaps not less difficult. As it greatly behoves us to form just ideas on this subject, I shall endeavour to give you some assistance with respect to it; and for this purpose, I beg you will attend to the following observations.

In the first place, though the actual suffering of the loss of goods, of liberty, of life, or of reputation (which is often more valuable than life) be not always required of Christians, the temper of mind which would enable them to bear the loss of all these, if the sacrifice should be demanded, is always required of us. All Christians are required now, as much as in the times of the apostles, to cultivate a superiority of mind to this world, and all the enjoyments and pursuits of it. They are required to have their affections so set on heaven, and

heavenly things; they are so to have their treasure and their citizenship in heaven, as that no earthly consideration shall be able to make them swerve from their duty. If any thing as dear to them as a right hand, or a right eye, would lead them to wrong conduct, they must cut it off, and cast it from them. They must not even hold their lives dear unto them, if it would prevent their finishing their course, or discharging the duty of a Christian, and that with joy, in every situation in which it shall please Divine Providence to place them. Our particular duties change with our circumstances, but the principle which leads to all duty, must ever be the same. This never changes; and where it really exists, it will not fail to make our duty, in all cases, eligible and joyful. A good man and a good Christian fears nothing but God, and hates nothing but sin.

Have we, then, my Christian brethren, this principle of duty within us? Have we that steady attachment to Christianity, and that firm faith in a future life, and the rewards which Christ has promised to his disciples there, that would enable us to bear persecution, and even death, rather than swerve from it? If we have, we are Christians, and shall undoubtedly receive the proper rewards of Christianity, whether we be actually called to suffer persecution and death, or not; as that soldier who keeps his rank, and holds himself ready to engage when called upon, is justly entitled to share the rewards of victory with those of his fellow-soldiers who happened to be called to the hottest action; because he would have engaged, and with as much alacrity, if it had been his place.

But, my brethren, (and it behoves us seriously to question ourselves on the subject,) if we be not ready and determined, when called upon, to bear persecution, and even unto death in the cause of Christ, we are not true Christians. If we be not prepared to suffer with Christ here, neither shall we reign and be glorified with him hereafter. If, in such a case, we would, in fact, deny him, he also will deny us. And though



it does not now appear to the world, or may not even be known to ourselves, what our behaviour in time of persecution for conscience' sake would be, it is always known to God. He sees and judges by the heart, and whatever our final destination may be, we shall then be satisfied of the equity of his decision.

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The principles and prospects of Christianity are, in themselves, so great, and so far overbalance all the things of the present life, that they only require to be sufficiently attended to, to make any person do or bear any thing for their sake.

What hardships will not men undergo, and what risk, even of life, will they not run, in order to obtain a great estate, and much more a crown, in this world? In such a case as this, the mere pain of dying would not be regarded by them, if they were sure that they should not actually die, but that, after this suffering, they should certainly gain their purpose. This we see in history, and in common life, continually. There can be no doubt, therefore, but that if the same persons had the same firm faith in the future glorious rewards of Christianity that they have with respect to the things of this life, it would enable them to do and to suffer as much in order to obtain them.

It is only a deficiency of faith that makes persons shrink from persecution and death in the cause of Christianity. Because, in reality, all the pains of this transitory life are nothing in comparison of that eternal weight of glory which awaits those who have faith and patience unto death, with respect to another.

## FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

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As to the motives for the forgiveness of injuries, what should operate more powerfully upon Christians than the example of Christ, from whom we are denominated? And very ill shall we be entitled to the name of Christians, if we do not adopt the sentiments, follow the example, and obey the precepts of Christ. What are the injuries that we have received, great as they have been, compared to his, to say nothing of the difference of our characters and deserts, his superiority with respect to which ought not only to have exempted him from injuries, but ensured to him the gratitude and best offices of his countrymen and the world. Instead of this, as soon as ever he made himself conspicuous, though it was by the most exemplary virtue and universal beneficence, he began to be envied, hated, and ill-treated, by the priests and leading men of his nation; (the church, as we may say, and the state;) and this malignity against him increased in proportion as he distinguished himself, till they carried into execution their diabolical purpose of putting him to a cruel and ignominious death.

Notwithstanding this, in the very moment of his greatest agony, he could pray, in the words of my text, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." What dignity, my brethren, what greatness of mind, what self-command, what benevolence, and what piety, were here! All that we can feel or do, will fall far short of this. But, nevertheless, let us strive to come as near to it as we can; for this is to approach the Divine character and conduct, which he imitated, and taught his followers to imitate, when he exhorted them to be "merciful, as our Father who is in heaven is merciful, and perfect, as he is perfect."

## CHARITY THE DEBT OF THE RICH TO THE POOR.

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THE rich, therefore, reflecting on the wise intentions of Providence, should not suppose that they have an absolute exclusive right to their superfluity; the wise should not be wise for themselves alone, nor should the powerful protect themselves only from insults and injuries. Our common Parent had far other and more extensive views in appointing this inequality. It was no less than to bind all the parts of the great whole more strictly together, to make the one more dependent upon the other; and by an exchange of good offices, easy to some, and necessary to others, give scope to the increase of generosity on one side, of gratitude on the other, and of benevolence on both; thus to advance them in real dignity and excellence of character, and thereby bring them to a near resemblance to Himself, the pattern of all perfection and excellence, to Him who is supremely, and, strictly speaking, alone good, as being the source of all goodness, who "is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works."

Had all men been equally well provided for, they would have been independent of one another, and of course unsocial and unfriendly, and therefore might have been disposed to avoid, rather than to court, that society of which they stood in no need; and a spirit of envy and hatred might have been the result. But the wants of some teach them humility, patience, and gratitude, excellent moral qualities; and the sight of distress softens the heart, and excites to acts of kindness in others, which strengthens the principle of benevolence, and thus meliorates the disposition, consequently the

characters of both are improved, and it is not easy to say which is the more so, by this circumstance of inequality in the distribution of the gifts of Providence.

Let not the rich man make a boast of his charity, as if he gave what he was under no obligation to give ; for, strictly speaking, it is a debt which he owes to the needy. Benevolence being the great law of our natures, and the happiness of all being the great object of the Divine government, whatever it be that promotes this end, is the proper duty of all, according to their respective abilities to contribute to it ; and any person is guilty of a breach of trust, who refrains from doing it. All the good that any man can do, he ought to do. The Divine Being, our common Parent, expects it of him, as a member of his large family ; and if he “judge the world in righteousness”, as he assuredly will, he will punish the person who does less than it was in his power to do, as having neglected a duty that was incumbent on him.

In whatever manner any person becomes possessed of wealth, it is the gift of God. If it have accrued to him from superior ingenuity or superior industry, that very superior ingenuity and spirit of activity, are alike the gift of God, who makes one man to differ in these respects, as well as others, from another man ; so that, as the apostle says, God may say to any man, “What hast thou that thou didst not receive?” And “if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” Consequently, not to make that disposition of our wealth which the Giver of it intended that we should, is to be guilty of ingratitude to God, and real injustice to man. It is to act the part of an unfaithful steward. For in this light, and no other, ought we to consider ourselves with respect to every thing that we have to spare, after the supply of our own wants.

Neither let the rich boast of their independence with respect to the poor. In fact they are more dependent upon the poor, than the poor are upon them ; and were all persons reduced to a level, every advantage of which they now boast

would vanish. They must then labor for themselves, and do for themselves those menial offices which are now done for them by others. But, happily for us all, there is such a foundation laid in the course of nature and the order of Providence, for that inequality in the conditions of men, which has so excellent an effect in binding us all together, in making our connexion both necessary and mutually advantageous, that no institutions of man can destroy it; though, as we are in duty bound, we may lessen the evils that necessarily arise from it.

## THE OBJECTS OF EDUCATION.

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THE general object of education is evidently to qualify men to appear to advantage in future life ; which can only be done by communicating to them such knowledge, and leading them to form such habits, as will lead them to be most useful hereafter : and in this the whole of their future being, to which their education can be supposed to bear any relation, is to be considered.

If I knew that my child would die when he had attained to the age of five or six years, and that his existence would then terminate ; I should certainly make no provision respecting him for any thing beyond that term, but endeavour to make him as happy as I could during the short period in which he could enjoy any thing. I would, for the same reason, provide for him only such gratifications as his infant nature was capable of.

Again, if I knew that he would attain to the age of manhood, but that then his existence would not be prolonged any farther ; I should endeavour, as well as I could, to qualify him for acting such a part as would be useful to himself and others in that period, but should never think of extending my plan so far as to enable him to pass a comfortable old age, a term of life to which I knew he never would arrive.

For the same plain reason, a man who believes that the whole period of his own existence, and that of his offspring, is confined to the present life, would act very absurdly if he should train up his children with a view to a future life, except so far as he should think that such a farther, though a



chimerical, object, might be subservient to his proper conduct in the present life.

These are obvious considerations, which ought to have their weight with all rational beings ; and according to them, the mere man of the world must allow, that a Christian, — who, as such, believes that himself and his offspring are destined to exist in a future life, and that the principles and habits that we form here have a decisive influence on our happiness hereafter, — would act irrationally, if he did not use his utmost endeavours to give his children such principles and habits, as would secure to them an interest in a future world. Such a regard to the principles of truth, of right, and of virtue, as would lead a man to be a martyr to them, would be absurd in an unbeliever ; because he would sacrifice his all for no real advantage ; but it would be most wise, and therefore right, in a Christian, who believes that such a glorious sacrifice, and the disposition of mind that leads to it, would secure him an everlasting recompence in a future state. Moreover, since a Christian regards this life, principally, as it is subservient to another, which is of infinitely more value, he must consider the duties of religion as the first thing to be attended to by him, and must be taught to disregard all authority that would enjoin upon him a conduct which would be detrimental to his greatest and ultimate interest ; because he will gain more by his steadiness in his regard to a higher authority, than he can lose by opposing an inferior power.

The first thing, therefore, that a Christian will naturally inculcate upon his child, as soon as he is capable of receiving such impressions, is the knowledge of his Maker, and a steady principle of obedience to him ; the idea of his living under the constant inspection and government of an invisible Being, who will raise him from the dead to an immortal life, and who will reward and punish him hereafter according to his character and actions here.

On these plain principles I hesitate not to assert, as a Christian, that religion is the first rational object of education.

Whatever be the fate of my children in this transitory world, about which I hope I am as solicitous as I ought to be, I would, if possible, secure a happy meeting with them in a future and everlasting life. I can well enough bear their reproaches for not enabling them to attain to worldly honors and distinctions ; but to have been in any measure accessory, by my neglect, to their final perdition, would be the occasion of such reproach and blame, as would be absolutely insupportable.

## OF INSTRUCTION IN THE PRINCIPLES OF MORALS AND RELIGION.

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IT has been a maxim hastily adopted, and with great plausibility supported, by some men of genius, that nothing should be inculcated upon children which they cannot perfectly understand and see the reason of. But, in fact, it has not been applied to any subject but that of religion, the doctrines of which are said to be too abstruse for their comprehension. Had the application of the maxim been made universal, the absurdity and impracticability of it could not but have been immediately perceived. In reality, we act upon the very contrary maxim in every thing that respects children, especially very young children ; and there is not, in the nature of things, a possibility of doing otherwise. Thus the ear of a child is accustomed to the sounds of all kinds of words long before he can possibly have any idea of their meaning.

It is upon this plan that the great business of education at large is conducted by Divine Providence. Appearances are continually presented to our view long before we are able to decypher them or to collect and apply the instruction which they are adapted to give us ; and the gradual decyphering of appearances, which we have long contemplated without understanding, contributes considerably to the pleasure of the discovery, and enhances the value and use of it. It is the same with children when they decypher our language ; and they are enabled to do it by the very same process, namely, comparing the different circumstances in which we use the same expression.

Besides, the mind may be very usefully impressed, and a foundation may be laid for future instruction, though no determinate ideas be communicated; and if, by accustoming children to the outward forms of religion only, as by making them keep silence, and kneel when others pray, &c. a general notion be gradually impressed upon their minds, that some reverence is due to a power which they do not see, and that there exists an authority to which all mankind, the rich and great, as well as the poor and mean, must equally bow, a good end will be gained. Besides, by this means, a mechanical habit will be formed, which will not be laid aside, till, by degrees, they come to know the reason of it, and to enter into it with understanding and pleasure; whereas they would not have had the same advantage for a rational knowledge and practice without that previous and mechanical habit. Thus a child who is made to bow mechanically upon being introduced into a room, or to persons of certain ranks and characters, before he can be sensible of the full meaning of it, afterwards enters more easily into those sentiments of decency and respect for stations and characters which distinguish the civilized from the uncivilized part of mankind. Thus, also, the custom of making bonfires on the fifth of November, in which children are as active as men, is of use to inspire them, at an earlier period than they would otherwise be capable of it, with an abhorrence of popery and arbitrary power, and makes them enter into those sentiments with much more warmth than they would otherwise have done.

Was the thing itself but of trifling consequence in the conduct of life, children might, without much inconvenience, be suffered to be unacquainted with any principles of religion, till they were capable of a rational inquiry into them, and a regular investigation of them; but, considering that religion is of unspeakable consequence in the conduct of life, inspiring just sentiments concerning God and our fellow-creatures, just notions of the business and end of life, and enforcing the obligations of conscience, in order to our attaining the proper

dignity and true happiness of our rational nature here, and infinitely superior felicity hereafter ; we ought not, surely, to neglect any part of a process which is naturally adapted to gain so great an end. Indeed, I believe that no person, who had himself a just sense of the importance of religion, ever imagined that there was any sort of impropriety in the religious instruction of his children.

It may be said that, in this method, we take an unfair advantage of the imbecility of the rational faculties, and inculcate truth by such a kind of mechanical prejudice as would enforce the belief of any thing ; and this is readily acknowledged, without any confession of impropriety in the thing. For the whole of our treatment of children is necessarily of a piece with this, prejudicing them in favor of our own opinions and practices ; so that there is hardly any thing that a child does not believe before he is acquainted with the proper grounds on which his belief ought to rest. It is sufficient for him that he has the authority of his parent, or tutor, for it ; and till he finds that he has been misled by his parent or tutor, he can never entertain any suspicion of them, or see any reason for examining and questioning what they assert. Rational conviction is generally preceded by such doubts and suspicions as a child cannot possibly have entertained. Can there be any reason then why we should avail ourselves of the authority of a parent in other things, and make an exception with respect to religion only ?

Besides, when the thing is rightly understood and considered, it will appear not to be so very difficult a matter to give even a child very useful notions of religion, and such as he shall sufficiently understand ; as that there is a being called God, who made him and all things ; that this Being, though invisible himself, sees us wherever we are, and that he will make us happy if we be good, and miserable if we be wicked. If it should appear that, for some time, a child conceives of God as of a man who lives above the clouds, and from thence sees every thing that is done upon the earth, there will no ma-

terial inconvenience attend it ; because it is only a sense of the power, the providence, and the government of God that is of principal importance to be inculcated. What else he is, or where he is, signifies very little in this case. A child may also be made to understand that this God gave a commission to a man, called Jesus Christ, to teach mankind his will and to persuade them to practise it ; that he was put to death by wicked men who would not hearken to him ; but that God raised him from the dead, and will send him again to raise all the dead ; when he will take the good with him into heaven, a place of happiness, and send the wicked into hell, a place of punishment.

There is nothing in all this but what a child, who has attained to the use of speech, may be made to understand sufficiently ; and yet, in fact, this is the substance of all that is most important in religion. When children come to read, they may easily be taught that the Bible contains several books written by good men, which give an account of the creation of the world, of what God has done for mankind, what he enjoins us to do here, and how he will dispose of us hereafter, together with the history of the prophets, of Jesus Christ, of his apostles, and of good men in all ages ; and they may be made to read the Scriptures, with the seriousness and respect that is due to them. No other history was ever written with such plainness and simplicity, no style is so easy as that of the historical books of Scripture ; and with a little judgment in selecting, and skill in explaining a few things and expressions, any child that can read may be instructed in the principles of religion from the Bible with peculiar advantage ; and his mind will be impressed with greater force by reading the words of God, and of his prophets, than those which proceed from any less authority.

Some may object to the scheme of inculcating the principles of virtue from a regard to any mere authority, or even from the consideration of rewards or punishments ; thinking it better to have them inculcated at the very beginning, from



the most generous principles only, so as to make children love virtue for its own sake. But such persons do not understand, or do not consider, the true origin of our affections. For the most disinterested of them become so by degrees only, and are far otherwise at their first formation. Except the mere gratification of our corporeal senses, we at first value and pursue every thing for some other end than itself, and afterwards come to value it for its own sake. A child has no love or affection for any person whatever, till he has felt their importance to himself, in the manner described before; and by degrees, dropping that immediate bond of union, he loves others without any regard to himself.

This process admits of the easiest illustration from what is known concerning the passion for money, which is acquired so late in life, that the whole process of it may be easily observed. Originally, money is not valued but for its use to procure us the gratification of a desire of something else; but, by the force of habit, misers come to make that an end, which at first was only a means, and are eagerly bent upon the accumulation of wealth as such, without ever thinking whether themselves, or any person for whose welfare they are solicitous, be likely to make any use of it.

If, therefore, we should follow nature, we must instruct children by the very same process. To talk to them of doing what is right, for its own sake, cannot have any influence upon them for the present. They must first of all have much easier lessons given them, and make farther advances as they are able. If any good be done by inculcating these refined maxims of conduct upon children, it must be by means of authority only, a child not being capable of comprehending any other reason why he should adopt them; and therefore they are very improperly urged by those, who object to the use of authority in teaching religion.

Whatever objection any person may have to the use of authority to inculcate the principles of religion or the maxims of right conduct upon children, all persons find themselves

obliged to have recourse to it, because they are not always able to explain to a child, their reasons for his acting as they prescribe; but content themselves with hoping that, when he has, by any means, been accustomed to do what it is his duty, interest, and happiness to do, he will in time be able to see that his duty, interest, and happiness are concerned in it, and therefore will be able to persevere from a regard to those better motives. In like manner, it behoves every wise parent to make use of his own authority, together with that of God, and also of the prospect of rewards and punishments, both here and hereafter, in order to enforce upon his child that course of conduct, which he wishes him to pursue from more ingenuous principles, as soon as he shall be capable of it.

Besides, the submission to competent authority is of itself right and our duty; and a habit of ready submission in this case will be of great use in the course of our lives. It ought, therefore, by all means, to be inculcated upon young persons; and this is best done, and the habit most effectually formed, by actually enforcing it, — especially where no other method can be taken to engage them to do their duty from conviction and inclination; and frequent occasions for this interposition of mere authority will occur, after persons are passed the years of infancy. For as reason acquires strength, the passions acquire strength also; insomuch that the aid of authority will be very useful till the full term at which the laws of this country empower a man to act for himself. Many persons, who are now arrived to the age of forty or fifty, may recollect occasions, on which they are thankful or would have been thankful for the control of another, when passion had blinded their own judgment, at, or even after, twenty-one years of age.

I will add, as an argument that must more especially enforce the religious instruction of children, that, in fact, a man has no choice, but whether his child shall imbibe the principles of true or false religion, i. e. what he himself shall deem to be so; as it will be absolutely impossible to keep the

minds of his children free from all impressions of this kind, unless they converse with nobody but himself, and a few select friends, who may be apprized of his scheme, and concur with him in it. Nay, if children go to any school, or be allowed to converse with the servants or dependants of his parent which cannot be entirely prevented, he must lose no time, and be very attentive and assiduous, or his good impressions will come too late to efface the bad ones, to which they will have been exposed. Things being thus circumstanced, no person, who considers the irreparable injury that may be done to the mind by enthusiastic and superstitious notions of religion, can hesitate about what he has to do in this case.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

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THE great importance of an early religious education may appear from this consideration, that the impression which ideas make upon the mind does not depend upon the definitions of them, but upon sensations, and a great variety of ideas, that have been associated with them; and these associations require time to be formed and cemented. The idea of God may be defined, and explained to a man of the world, who has hardly ever heard, and seldom thought of him; but the impression that is made upon his mind when the name of God is, at any time, mentioned to him, cannot be the same with that which will be felt by a person who has been accustomed to hear and think of God from his infancy, who has been much conversant in the Scriptures, and has lived in a general habit of devotion. In the mind of such a person the idea of God must have acquired a thousand associations, which, though they are infinitely complex, will be felt as one sensation; but, from the nature of the thing, it is impossible that it should be ever fully explained, or communicated to another. The analysis of such an idea is far too difficult a problem for any human sagacity; or if the thing were possible, the doing of it would not enable a person to communicate the sensations that entered into it; because the same events in life would be necessary to it; and without these the same resulting ideas and impressions cannot be obtained.

For this reason no two persons can have precisely the same idea of any thing about which they are much conversant; for

the minute associations which enter into it will be different, though they may have a great resemblance ; and perhaps there is no object of our thoughts from the impression of which men feel more differently, than the idea of God ; though the impression made by it on the minds of persons educated in a similar manner will be nearly the same, so that by using the same words they may communicate what may, with sufficient propriety, be called the same feelings to each other.

This observation, which appears to me of considerable importance, I shall endeavour to illustrate by a case that very much resembles it. All persons know what is meant by the term *father*, and if they are asked, would define it in the same manner ; but the man who has never known a father of his own, or, which is nearly the same thing, has had little connection with him, no dependence upon him, or particular obligation to him, will by no means have the same feelings when the word is pronounced to him, with the man who was brought up in a constant uninterrupted intercourse with a father, and has been the object of innumerable endearments and kind offices, and who has likewise frequently felt the effects of paternal correction. Every instance of this nature has an effect, and therefore leaves an impression upon the mind, which is not wholly lost. For though it soon becomes separately indiscernable, it makes part of an infinitely complex sensation, and is one of the elements of what is called *filial affection*, or that mixture of love and reverence which is the necessary result of paternal care properly conducted. Now the most transient idea suggested by the word *father* will excite in the mind of such a son a secondary idea, which, though it does not affect the definition of the term, is, however, inseparable from it ; and if dwelt upon, it will unfold itself into a most exquisite and incommunicable feeling. To have this feeling a man must have lived a whole life in a particular manner.

In like manner, besides those ideas annexed to such words as *God, religion, future life, &c.* which can be communicated to others by their definitions, there are what are sometimes called *secondary* ideas, or feelings, which are aggregate sensations, consisting of numberless other sensations and ideas, which have been associated with them, and which it is absolutely impossible for one person to communicate to another ; because the same education, the same course of instruction, the same early discipline, the same or similar circumstances in life, and the same reflections upon those circumstances, must have concurred in the formation of them. They are, however, these infinitely complex and indescribable feelings that often give those ideas the greatest force, and their influence upon the mind and conduct ; because dispositions to love, fear, and obey God have a thousand times followed those complex feelings, and pious and worthy resolutions have been connected with them.

On this account, persons whose education has been much neglected, but who begin to hear of religion and apply themselves to it late in life, can never acquire the devotional feelings of those who have had a religious education ; nor can it be expected that they will be uniformly influenced by them. They may use the same language, but their feelings will, notwithstanding, be very different.

The difference is, however, nothing more than is observed in other similar cases. A man, who has from his infancy been conversant with any thing, will have ideas of it very differently modified from those of the person who has acquired them by the information of others, or later in life. A person who has been bred in a camp will have very different ideas of every thing relating to war from those who have only heard or read of such things, or who have seen something of war later in life ; and the ideas of the former cannot, in the nature of things, be communicated with precision to others ; because the component parts of those ideas, or rather the feelings,



were acquired by passing through a variety of scenes which made a deep impression upon the mind, and therefore left traces proportionably deep.

I shall conclude with observing, that the influence of general states of mind, turns of thought, and fixed habits, which are the consequence of them, is so great, that too much attention cannot be given to education, and the conduct of early life. Supposing the present laws of our minds to continue (and there is no more reason to expect a change in them than in any other of the laws of nature), our happiness to endless ages must depend upon it. It is a necessary consequence of the principle of association, that the mind grows more callous to new impressions continually; it being already occupied with ideas and sensations which render it indisposed to receive others, especially of a heterogeneous nature.

We, in fact, seldom see any considerable change in a person's temper and habits after he has grown to man's estate. Nothing short of an entire revolution in his circumstances and mode of life can effect it. This analogy will lead us to consider the state of our minds at the commencement of another life (being produced by the whole of our passage through this) as still more fixed, and indisposed to any change for the better or worse. Consequently, our happiness or misery for the whole of our existence depends, in a great measure, on the manner in which we begin our progress through it.

The effects of religious impressions made upon the mind in early life may be overpowered for a time by impressions of an opposite nature, but there will always be a possibility of their reviving in favorable circumstances; i. e. in circumstances in which ideas formerly connected with religious impressions will necessarily be presented to the mind, and detained there. Let a man be ever so profligate, his friends may always have hopes of his being reclaimed, if he had a religious education, and his religious impressions were not effaced very early. But if no foundation of religion has been

laid in early life, many of the most favorable opportunities of being brought to a sense of their duty are lost upon them. For in the minds of such persons there are no religious impressions, not even in a dormant state, and capable of being revived by circumstances that have the most natural and the strongest connections with them. Also ideas of religion, like those of other objects with which we form an acquaintance too late in life, will never make much impression ; and being foreign, and dissimilar to all the other impressions with which the mind has been occupied, they will never be able to take place for a sufficient length of time ; other associations continually taking place to the exclusion of these.

Besides, as the objects about which we are much conversant are apt to become magnified in our minds, as persons unavoidably value their own professions and pursuits, and the more in proportion as they have less knowledge of others ; habits and practices that are really vicious, ultimately pernicious in society, and quite opposite to every thing of a religious nature, will have formed unnatural associations with ideas of honor, spirit, and other things of a similar kind ; so that some virtues and religious duties, as humility, modesty, temperance, chastity, &c. will never appear to them respectable and engaging ; and, on account of the connexion of these virtues with others, every thing belonging to strict morals and religion will be regarded with aversion and contempt. This turn of thinking may, for want of early religious impressions, be so confirmed that nothing in the usual course of human life shall be able to change it. The very things that are the means and incitements to religion and devotion in previously well-disposed minds, have the very opposite effect on others. Thus we see that the reading of the devotional parts of Scripture, of incidents in the life of Christ and the apostles, the meditation upon which fills the minds of some with reverence and devotion, even to ecstasy, are read by others with ridicule or disgust. No argument can be of any use to such persons, because the thing that is wanting is

a proper set of associated feelings arising from actual impressions, the season for which is over, and will never return. The contempt of religion in such persons is only increased by endeavours to persuade them of its value ; so that it is much more advisable, when persons are got to a certain pitch of infidelity and profligacy, to let them alone, and entirely cease to remonstrate with them on the subject. The very discoursing about religion only revives such ideas as they have formerly connected with it, and which renders the subject odious to them.

The plain inference from all this is, that if we wish that religious impressions should ever have a serious hold upon the mind, they must be made in early life. Care, however, must be taken, lest, by making religious exercises too rigorous, an early aversion be excited, and so the very end we have in view be defeated.

## INFIDELITY.

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IF I be asked why I write so much as I do, on the subject of *the Evidences of Christianity* (for many of my publications relate to it,) I answer, that both its infinite importance and the extraordinary crisis of the times call for it from every person who conceives that he has any prospect of being heard and attended to. There is no subject whatever with respect to which I am more fully satisfied myself; and few persons, I imagine, will pretend that they have given so much attention to it as I have done. It does not, however, follow from this circumstance, that I have viewed it in every possible light, and that others may not discover what I have overlooked. I have therefore wished to promote the most free and open discussion of it, and have not failed to invite, nay, to provoke, this examination, on every proper occasion.

When, however, we have done all that we can, we must leave the event to a wise Providence, whose instruments we are, and which has, no doubt, the best ends to answer both by the promulgation of Christianity, and the present remarkable progress of infidelity. And believing this, we should not, after doing what we conceive to be our duty, make ourselves unhappy; though influenced, as we necessarily are, by the objects that are nearest to us, it must give pain to every zealous Christian to see so many persons, for whose intellectual and moral improvement he is concerned, and especially his near friends and relations, carried away by the torrent, which he sees to sweep before it every principle that he feels to be most valuable and useful to himself; leaving

them mere worldly-minded beings instead of heavenly-minded, bounding their prospects by the grave, when his own most pleasing prospects are beyond it.

When I read the Scriptures, in which I have increasing satisfaction as I advance in life, the animating accounts which there abound, of the perfections and providence of God, extending to all the affairs of individual men as well as those of states and kingdoms; and especially the glorious prospects that are there given us of the future state of things in the world, with respect to the great events which seem now to be approaching; and the light that is thrown over the state beyond the grave, so encouraging to every virtuous endeavour; I cannot help wishing that all persons might partake with me in them, and I feel the most sensible concern for those who cannot do it. Unbelievers cannot have the solid consolation that Christians have, under all the troubles of life, especially those that are endured for the sake of a good conscience, arising from the persuasion that all things are working together for their good, if not here, yet assuredly hereafter. Least of all can the unbeliever, at the approach of death, sing the triumphant song of the Christian, "O grave, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?"

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I wish it were possible for me to convey to my philosophical unbelieving friends, the feeling I have of the value of Christianity, a value which is enhanced by the experience of a pretty long and various life, in which Christian principles have been of the most substantial use to me, both in prosperity and in adversity; and, as they have supported me through life, they will, I doubt not, afford consolation in the hour of death. But it is not in the power of language to express all that I feel on this subject. Such complex feelings as I wish to communicate, have been formed by associations that have been accumulating in a long series of events and reflections; in reading, thinking, and conversation, &c.; so that a man must have lived in a great measure as I have lived, and



consequently have felt what I have felt, before he can be impressed as I am, with the language appropriated to religion, and especially the language of the Scriptures. What impresses me with the deepest reverence, would be heard by many with indifference or contempt.

My reader may make an experiment, as it were, on his own feelings, by attending to the prayer of Jesus, in the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel, and the language of Paul, in those epistles which he wrote from Rome a short time before his death.

But animating and encouraging as their language is, to those who, like Jesus and Paul, have in some measure devoted their lives and employed their best talents, to the same great purposes, it cannot be felt, and will be but imperfectly conceived, by others. Some persons, however, who have not taken their place in the seat of the scorner, if their early education has not been very unfavourable, and especially if they have been so happy as to have met with disappointments in life, may conceive that there is something enviable in the state of mind in which their language could be adopted.

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Young persons are apt to be dazzled with the reputation of several unbelievers, who have been greatly overrated by their friends. I feel no disposition to detract from their merit in any respect, though I think integrity the most important qualification in searching after truth. But, however brilliant may have been the talents of some unbelievers (I speak only of writers), they are not the men to whom the world is most indebted for making real advances in useful knowledge. In this respect I will venture to say, that nothing of much consequence has been done by any of them. Mr. Hume, I have shown in my "Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever," did not advance a single step in metaphysics, in which he held himself out as having done the most. The excellence of Voltaire was that of a poet and a lively writer. D'Alembert can hardly be classed among writers in defence



of infidelity; but his merit, besides that of an elegant writer in prose, is that of a mathematician, and he did not much advance the bounds of that branch of knowledge. The rest have no claim to reputation, but as writers against revelation. And what were any or all them, compared with Newton, Locke, or Hartley, who were equally eminent as divines and as philosophers?

But what young persons entering upon life should be most influenced by (if by any thing besides the mere love of truth,) is the tendency of any system to promote virtue and happiness. In this respect what can we infer concerning Voltaire and D'Alembert, from their own letters, but that they were men full of self-conceit, despising even all unbelievers besides themselves, full also of jealousy and malignity, perpetually complaining of the world, and of all things in it; and if we join to them their correspondent and admirer (but one whom it is evident they did not much admire), the late king of Prussia, we shall not add much to the mass of moral respectability or real happiness. No Christian, in the humblest and most afflicted situation in life, need to envy them. I would not exchange my own feelings, even those in situations in which they would have thought me an object of compassion, for all the satisfaction they could have enjoyed in the happiest scenes of their lives. To social beings the great balm of life is friendship, founded on real esteem and affection, and of this they evidently had very little; whereas the attachment that I feel for many of my Christian friends, though now separated from me by the ocean, and some of them by death, is, I am confident, a source of infinitely greater satisfaction to me, than all their friendships ever were, or could be of, to them.

## TENDENCY TO ATHEISM IN MODERN UNBELIEVERS.

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THE progress of infidelity in the present age is attended with a circumstance which did not so frequently accompany it in any former period, at least in England, which is, that unbelievers in revelation generally proceed to the disbelief of the being and providence of God, so as to become properly Atheists. However, when the subject is duly considered, it will be found that the same disposition and turn of mind which leads to Deism, will naturally, in the present state of knowledge, lead to Atheism.

Whatever exceptions there may be to the observation, it is for the most part true, that a wish to reject revelation precedes the actual rejection of it. The belief of it is felt as a restraint, which many persons are desirous of throwing off; and this is more effectually done on the atheistical than on the deistical system. I must be allowed to take it for granted, because I am confident that, with few exceptions (and I should rejoice if I could think they were more), it is a fact, that it is the too strict morals of the Scriptures that displeases the generality of unbelievers. The rule of life prescribed in those books is more definite and less easily evaded, than that which is perceived by the mere light of nature, which is too easily made to bend to men's inclinations; so that they who profess to follow that only, find no great difficulty in justifying to themselves any indulgence to which they are much inclined, and which Christians of every denomination condemn. And for the same reason that an unbeliever, viciously inclined, prefers natural to revealed re-

ligion, he will prefer no religion at all, or pure atheism, which rejects every idea of a future state, to deism which admits of it.

While the rewards of virtue and the punishments of vice are supposed to take place in this life only, and are seen to be what they really are, very various and uncertain, a regard to them will not be sufficient to control strong natural inclinations. We see every day that, though habitual intemperance occasions diseases and premature death, thousands, who yet are as far from courting disease or death as other persons, persist in sensual indulgence; thinking at the time that in each particular transgression of the rules of temperance, there is little, if any thing, criminal; that it is a thing which affects themselves only; and flatter themselves that the consequences will either not take place with respect to them, or will be inconsiderable, so as to be overbalanced by the present enjoyment. Now were all consideration of religion removed, men would have no more restraint with respect to any practice whatever, to which they were naturally inclined, than they usually have with respect to excess in eating and drinking. They would have no dread of future punishment, and would flatter themselves with the hope of escaping any temporal inconvenience.

While the belief of the being of a God, of a providence, and of a future state, were articles of faith with those who rejected revelation (which was the case with all the celebrated unbelievers in England in the last and beginning of the present century), there was a considerable restraint upon men's conduct. It is true that the rule of moral duty is less accurately defined on the principles of the mere light of nature, than on those of revelation, and therefore unbelievers could without self-reproach take greater liberties in their conduct than Christians; but still there would remain a suspicion, that the Supreme Being, who would hereafter call them to account for their conduct, might judge differently from what they did; and as they would not be able at all times to secure the ap-

probation of their own minds in their reflections on their conduct, so fully as they could wish to do it, they might dread the more impartial judgment of God. But this apprehension and restraint, to whatever it might amount, would be wholly removed on the supposition of there being no God, no providence, or future state. A vicious unbeliever in revelation would therefore naturally not be displeased on finding the evidence for this belief weaker than he had thought it to be, and rejoice when he could think it to be of no weight at all. And this shows the natural tendency of deism to atheism. If a man be an unbeliever in a future state, it is of little or no consequence with respect to his conduct, whether he believe in the being of a God or not; because on that supposition this belief would add nothing to the sanctions of virtue.

Or, supposing the disposition, or bias, that leads a man to infidelity be not a propensity to any kind of vicious indulgence, but only a wish to be considered as a person free from vulgar prejudices, and one who thinks for himself; he will be farther removed from the vulgar by rejecting the belief of a God, a providence, and a future state, than by the rejection of revelation only. If he have any thing of this disposition, which is felt in a greater or less degree by most persons of liberal education, or who have much intercourse with the fashionable world, he will feel more pride and self-complacence in proportion as he recedes farther from the ideas and sentiments of those whose education has been more confined, and who have seen less of the world than he has done.

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M. Volney's account of the primitive condition of man, without any known author or guide, is not a little curious. He says "it is a sufficient answer to all systems which suppose the interposition of a God, in the origin of the world, 'that man receives all his ideas by means of his senses;' that 'at his origin man was formed naked, with respect to body and mind, thrown by accident upon the earth, confused and savage, an orphan abandoned by the unknown power

which produced him. He found no being descended from the heaven to inform him of his wants, which he learns only from his senses, or of his duties, which arise only from his wants. Like other animals, without experience of the past, or foresight of the future, he wandered in the midst of the forest, guided and governed by the affections of his nature. By the pain of hunger he was led to his food, and to provide for his sustenance; by the intemperature of the air he wished to cover his body, and he made himself clothes; by the attraction of pleasure he approached a being like himself, and perpetuated his species.' ”

M. Volney did not, surely, consider that the first man, let him have had a maker or no maker; let him have dropped from the clouds, or have risen out of the earth; let him have been produced in a state of infancy or of manhood; yet that, without instruction, he must have perished before he could, by his own sensations and experience, have acquired knowledge enough to preserve his life. The pain of hunger would have come upon him long before he could have learned to walk, or have got the use of any of his limbs; and the more full grown he was at the time of his production, the more difficult would his learning to walk, or even to crawl, have been. Man, therefore, must have had a guide as well as a maker; and divine interposition was absolutely necessary at his entrance into life. M. Volney's idea was evidently that of a Robinson Crusoe, thrown upon an uninhabited island, with all the knowledge that he had acquired in the course of his former life. His primitive man must have been produced with the instinctive knowledge of a gardener at least. He must have been able to distinguish fruits that were wholesome from those that were noxious, and have got, by some means or other, the use of his limbs, his eyes, and other senses, before it would have been in his power to avail himself of that knowledge.

Let M. Volney consider what he himself, with his present strength of muscles and acuteness of intellect, could have



done, in the situation of his primitive man. Let him have been left on the earth in ever so favorable a climate, and in ever so warm and comfortable a place, so as to want no clothing; yet, having no ideas but such as he got by the impression of the objects around him, he would have been no better than a great sprawling infant. By the stimulus of light he would have opened and shut his eyes, but would have had no idea of the relative distances of any objects. The nearest tree, the remotest hill, and even the heavenly bodies would have seemed to be in the same plane and all contiguous to him. He might have moved his arms and legs in an automatic manner, but he would not have been able to rise from the ground. He would have felt the pain of hunger; but though the most proper food should have happened to be ever so near to him, he could not have known, without experience, that eating would remove that pain. He would therefore have lain a helpless prey to the first wild beast, if there were any, that should have happened to find him. If it should have happened that a female, of the same size, had been produced at the same time, and have been dropped by another accident (the chance of which must have been very small indeed) ever so near him; being equally ignorant, they would have been equally helpless, and must soon have perished together, without any perpetuation of the species. All would have been to begin again, and to no better purpose.

If M. Volney will give himself time to think a little more closely on this important subject, he will find that Divine interpositions must have been necessary at least at the formation of man, or that his formation would have been in vain; and if they were necessary then, they may have been expedient, since that time. Moses's account of the primitive state of man, though not without its difficulties, is certainly much more probable than that of M. Volney. Indeed, no hypothesis can well be more improbable than his.



## THE PREVALENCE OF INFIDELITY.

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ARDENTLY as the zealous Christian must wish for the extension of his religion, and the universal prevalence of those principles which he conceives calculated to enlighten his own mind, to cheer his heart under all the vicissitudes of life, and to give him hope even in death; and much as he will, consequently, lament the prevalence of principles which have an opposite tendency; yet, upon a more extensive view of the subject, he will see no reason to be disturbed or alarmed at the present aspect of things.

The prevalence of infidelity, great as it certainly is, can never be universal. Admitting revealed religion to be ever so ill-founded, no better, for example, than the heathenism of the Greeks and Romans, yet being the faith of the bulk of the common people in all countries called Christian, and they having a strong attachment to it, it may be taken for granted that they will long continue to believe it; since it is universally true that the common people, who receive their opinions and practices from their ancestors, and are little disposed to speculate, are very backward to change them, and retain them a long time after the more thinking and inquisitive abandon them. This we see to be the case even when the new religion has something the most inviting to offer in the place of the system that is to be given up. Heathenism continued in many villages of the Roman empire six hundred years after the promulgation of Christianity. But as modern unbelievers do not pretend to have any thing to propose as an

equivalent to what the Christian must abandon, it may be expected to continue much longer in the world, and independently of any rational evidence in its favor.

But the rational Christian, having no doubt of the truth of his religion, is confident that it will finally prevail, and by its own evidence, when it comes to be attended to, bear down all opposition. It will be sufficient to all impartial persons, even those who have not the leisure, or the means, of entering into the historical investigation themselves, that the truly intelligent, the inquisitive, the candid, and the virtuous, will be the friends of revelation; and that the firm belief of it tends to form a character superior to that of unbelievers, inspiring a dignity and elevation of mind incompatible with any thing mean or base.

The true Christian, having a constant respect to God, a providence, and a future state, feels himself less interested in the things that excite the avarice, the ambition, and other base passions of men; and consequently his mind, elevated by devotion, more easily expands itself into universal benevolence, and all the heroic virtues that are connected with it. The Christian, believing that every thing under the government of God will have a glorious termination in universal virtue and universal happiness, easily yields himself the willing instrument in the hands of Providence, for so great a purpose; and considering himself as, with the apostle, a worker together with God, he will live a life of habitual devotion and benevolence; sentiments which are inconsistent with a propensity to sensual and irregular indulgence.

On the other hand, the generality of unbelievers will appear to be persons to whom the subject of religion is on some account or other, unpleasant; who, therefore, give but little attention to it or its evidences, and therefore cannot be deemed competent judges of them, whatever be their ability or knowledge in other respects. A great proportion of them, it cannot be denied, are also profligate and licentious in their

manners ; and seldom or never looking to God, or a providence, they must have their views greatly contracted, and of course shew other symptoms of a little and narrow mind.

If any persons will say that the principles of Christianity tend not to elevate but to debase the human character, I cannot help, from my own very different views of things, concluding his mind is under some very improper influence, such as prevents his forming a true judgment in one of the clearest of cases. If he be capable of understanding Hartley's Theory of the Mind, he may see what I have advanced on this subject demonstrated, as far as any thing relating to the affections of the mind is capable of demonstration. He may see the pleasures of sensation, imagination, ambition, self-interest, sympathy, theopathy, and the moral sense, rise in due gradation, and the three last-mentioned to coalesce and absorb the former, as the human character advances in excellence ; the consequence of which is a capacity for higher and more durable gratifications with respect to a man's self, and superior qualifications and dispositions for communicating happiness to others.

Also, the great views opened to us in revelation, and in revelation only, are necessary, as I have shewn in my "Discourses on the Evidence of Revealed Religion," to enlarge the comprehension of the human mind, and thereby to give us the same kind of superiority over other men, that men in general have over brutes. Unbelievers in revelation and a future state will have very little inducement to think of God, or of a providence ; and consequently, with very few exceptions, they become not only practical, but speculative atheists. It is impossible, therefore, that they should attain that state of habitual devotion, or that constant regard to God, that lively sense of his intimate presence with them, and government over them, which is necessary to great excellence of character, and which has an intimate connexion with the most disinterested and active benevolence.

I am far, however, from being unwilling to acknowledge, that there are many persons, of whose understandings I have the highest opinion, but whose objects of attention have been wholly different from mine, who will be so far from concurring with me in this opinion, of the superiority of the Christian character, that they will treat it with contempt; and unless all their habits of living and thinking (which go together), could be reversed, there is no prospect of leading them to entertain different ideas. In this case there is no remedy. We must continue to differ. They will make light of my opinion on the subject, and I shall consider them with compassion; hoping, however, that in a future period of their existence, even they will come to feel and think as I do, and that we shall all see reason to rejoice in reflecting on the wonderful, but eventually successful methods, by which such a glorious catastrophe will have been brought about.

Considering the many disadvantages under which the defence of Christianity now labors, especially from a prevailing aversion to the subject, and a consequent indisposition to give that attention to its evidences which the importance of it requires; seeing so many excellent defences of it pass unheeded, or without any considerable effect, except confirming the faith of those who are already Christians; I say, judging from this aspect of things, I am inclined to think that the final triumph which is destined for the Christian religion, and which is the subject of so many prophecies, will not be left to be accomplished by the slow process of argumentation (which, however, would no doubt produce the same effect in a sufficient length of time), but by another age of miracles, more illustrious than any that have yet been displayed, and which is also the subject of several prophecies; especially that of Joel, quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost, which I do not think has yet had its proper accomplishment. "It shall come to pass in the last day, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh," &c.; and that this glorious time will

be preceded by the personal appearance of Christ descending in the clouds of heaven, and coming to exercise his proper kingdom.

This second coming of Christ, and the commencement of the millenium, we are led by a whole series of prophecies to expect immediately after the overthrow of the present European monarchies, which are evidently tottering to their base. Judging also by what we see, there is no prospect of the general conversion of the Jews but in such a manner as the apostle Paul was converted, that is, by the personal appearance of Christ himself; when, and not before, they will say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

According to the same spirit of prophecy, the destruction of popery, or Paul's man of sin, is not to be effected but by the appearance of Christ himself; and this event may not be very distant. In short, all things seem to be approaching in an extraordinary manner, but by the operation of natural causes, to the very state that was foretold so many ages ago, as to precede those glorious and happy times, when "the whole earth" will be filled with "the knowledge of the Lord;" when there will be, though in fact here below, "new heavens and a new earth, in which will dwell righteousness."

In the mean time, Christianity will serve to discriminate the characters of men. It will in general be cheerfully embraced by the worthiest and the best of men, and it will be the means of making them worthier and better, while it will be rejected by the unworthy; and this rejection, accompanied with a less restrained indulgence of their appetites, and their giving with more eagerness into a variety of worldly pursuits, will tend to debase their character still more. And, from the knowledge that I have of men, it is evident to me that this is the case in fact.

That Christianity should have this twofold effect is not extraordinary. It is necessarily the case, in the wise plan of Providence, with every other means of virtuous improvement. Neither prosperity nor adversity are ever sent in vain, never

leaving any man as they found him, but always making him either better or worse. Prosperity may either make a man more grateful to God, and more benevolent to man ; or it may make him proud, insolent, and unfeeling ; and adversity may either make him humble and resigned, or fretful, peevish, and malevolent.

The intelligent Christian will also see a valuable purpose answered by the present prevalence of infidelity. It is a striking fulfilment of the prophecies of our Saviour ; who, though he foretold that his church should never fail, likewise intimated that, at his second coming, he should not find much faith (or a general belief and expectation of his coming) in the earth. It is likewise a confirmation of what the apostles have written concerning the apostacy of the latter days. In the mean time, the prevalence of infidelity is the most efficacious means of purifying our religion from the abuses and corruptions which at present debase it ; and especially of overturning the civil establishments of Christianity in all Christian countries, whereby the kingdom of Christ has been made a kingdom of this world, having been made subservient to the corrupt policy of men, and in every respect the reverse of what it originally was.

Thus are unbelievers employed by Divine Providence to reform the Christian church. They will do it far more effectually than its friends would have done ; and this will pave the way for its universal prevalence hereafter. Thus the corruptions and abuses of Christianity produce infidelity ; and this infidelity is the means, in the wise order of Providence, of the complete cure of those corruptions and abuses, with only a temporary and partial injury to that religion, of which they are so great an incumbrance.



## DUTY OF CHRISTIANS RESPECTING THE PRESENT PREVALENCE OF INFIDELITY.

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IN this state of the open rejection of Christianity by so many persons of the most conspicuous characters, it is the peculiar duty of every Christian to make the most open profession of his religion, without being moved by the apostacy of ever so great a number, or the obloquy or ridicule to which he may be exposed on that account ; remembering the awful denunciation of our Saviour, “Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words — of him also will the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.”

In order to make this open profession of Christianity to the most advantage, it is necessary that Christians should assemble for the purpose of public worship, though in the smallest numbers ; letting it be known that there is such worship, and that others may attend if they please. A Christian who is not known to be such, except by the general uprightness of his conduct, will no doubt be respected, but not as a Christian. It will not be known on what principles he acts, and therefore others will be but little wiser or better by his means. But a Christian church, a number of persons regularly meeting as such, to encourage and edify one another, reading the Scriptures, and administering Christian ordinances, is, as our Saviour said, “a city set on a hill,” which “cannot be hid ;” and when our light thus shines before men, others will not only see our good works, but also the principles from which they proceed, and thus be led to

glorify our Father who is in heaven. For the same reason, when a spurious and corrupt Christianity is most prevalent, the more intelligent Christians should separate themselves, and form other societies for public worship, that unbelievers may have an opportunity of judging between them, and not be led to take it for granted that there is no Christianity, but such as they perhaps justly reject.

Every Christian should, as far as possible, make himself master of the arguments in favor of his religion, that he may appear not to be governed by a principle of implicit faith, but, as the apostle Peter says, "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him." And the main argument for the truth of Christianity (but from the discussion of which all unbelievers have hitherto shrunk) is very plain and intelligible. It is the certain belief of the great facts on which it is founded, by those who must have known the truth of the case, and who were most nearly interested to ascertain it. If, on such undeniable evidence, it be true, that Christ wrought real miracles, that he died and rose from the dead, the Christian religion is true ; and we may depend upon it that, according to his repeated declarations, he will come again, to raise all the dead, to judge the world, and to give to every man according to his works, (which is all that is of most consequence in Christianity,) whatever unbelievers may find to object to the system in other respects.

But we should most carefully bear in mind, that in the defence of Christianity, as in our whole conduct, we should show a disposition worthy of it. Besides that uniform superiority of mind to this world, which removes us to the greatest distance from every thing mean and base ; besides that spirit of habitual devotion and universal benevolence which raises the human character to the highest pitch of moral excellence, (of the most important elements of which, unbelievers, who have not the enlarged views that Christianity opens to us, are necessarily destitute,) let our behaviour towards

unbelievers themselves be the reverse of what theirs generally is towards Christians, and which is so conspicuous in the writings of Voltaire and others. Let there be nothing in it of their sarcastic turn of mind, which implies both contempt and malevolence. Let it be with that meekness and benevolence which the apostles so strongly recommended. (1 Peter, iii. 15; 2 Tim. ii. 25.) Let every thing we say on the subject, or do with respect to it, discover the greatest good-will and friendly concern for those who differ from us, though in a matter of so much consequence. Let us consider them as persons who are unhappily misled by false views of things, and whom, if they be of a candid disposition, a juster view will set right; but whom an angry or contemptuous opposition would irritate and alienate more than ever.

Let us regard Christianity itself as only a means of virtue and moral improvement, and therefore let us rejoice if infidelity do not (as, however, it is too apt to do), lead men into vice. Unbelievers may be men of decent and valuable characters, though destitute of the more sublime virtues which give the greatest dignity to human nature, and fit them in a more eminent manner for the peculiar employment, and the peculiar happiness, of a future state. Let us also indulge the pleasing hope, that hereafter, though not at present, their minds, if not essentially depraved, wanting only that farther light which will irresistibly burst upon them hereafter, they will be every thing that we can wish for them; and therefore that, though we differ at present, we shall sometime hence rejoice together. We are all brethren, children of the same Father; and though differing ever so much in other respects, should regard and love one another as such. Besides, how can we show our superiority or greater comprehension of mind, arising from a habit of attending to great and distant objects and looking beyond ourselves, but by greater meekness, forbearance, candor, and benevolence towards men; as well as by greater resignation, and habitual devotion with

respect to God, and a greater command over our appetites and passions in general?

We should ever bear in mind, that superior knowledge implies superior obligations. As to believe in a God, and yet live as without God in the world, is worse than being an atheist; so to profess Christianity, while its principles have no influence upon us, not improving our dispositions and conduct, is much worse than not to believe it at all. A profligate unbeliever is much more excusable than a worldly-minded, immoral Christian, a Christian destitute of candor and benevolence.

Christians surrounded by unbelievers, perhaps without any opportunity of attending public worship, and the received custom of the times excluding the mention of any thing relating to religion in conversation, should be careful to confirm and strengthen their own faith by a voluntary attention to the principles and evidences of it. Faith, as Dr. Hartley has shown, admits of degrees; and between a merely rational faith (or the simple assent of the mind to a speculative truth), and practical faith (or that cordial reception of it which warms the heart and influences the conduct), the difference is almost infinite. The former, as it respects Christianity, is of very little value, as we see in the generality of Christians, who being wholly immersed in the affairs of the world, and giving little or no attention to their Christian principles, are little, if at all, the better for them. Nay, they are the more criminal on this account; being possessed of so great a treasure, and making no proper use of it. The latter only is that faith which the apostle says, works by love, which purifies the heart and reforms the life; and it cannot be formed and kept up in the actual circumstances of life, without great and unremitted attention.

A person, therefore, who wishes to be a Christian to any good purpose, must make it his daily practice to read the Scriptures, and other books which tend to interest him in

their contents. Much of the time that his necessary business, whatever it be, allows for reading, he will with peculiar satisfaction devote to this; and he will not satisfy himself with saying that, having once read the Scriptures and well enough remembering their general contents, he has no occasion to look into them any more. The consequence of the frequent reading of the Scriptures, and books relating to Christianity, will be, that his religion, or something relating to it, will be the subject to which his thoughts will naturally turn, whenever the business of life does not call them another way; and even in the midst of business he will have many moments of pleasing and serious reflection, which will have a happy effect in preserving that equanimity which is so desirable amidst the vicissitudes of this life, preventing undue elation in prosperity, and depression in adversity; from that sense of the wise and impartial providence of God superintending all events, and the happy termination to which all things are tending, which this practice will naturally impress upon his mind.

If a Christian have any friends, whose views of things are similar to his own, he will naturally resort to them, and they will strengthen each other's faith, hope, and joy, by conversing on the subject of religion; as persons of the same sentiments and views in politics, inflame their ardor in a common cause by frequent intercourse and conversations. I am even not altogether without hope, that this open rejection of Christianity by such great numbers, and the contempt with which it is treated by them, will operate like persecution of other kinds, and animate the zeal of its rational and steady friends; and also, that this zeal may lead to methods of extending the knowledge of Christianity and its evidences, to others who are but imperfectly acquainted with them, which may end in the rechristianizing of the world, and that on principles better founded, and therefore more stable than ever.

But to effect this desirable end, it is necessary, that Christians make their religion a primary object, and consider every



thing relating to this life as subordinate to it; as, if there be a future life, of so much more value than this, they reasonably ought to do. Let "the children of this world," as our Saviour calls them, give their whole attention, as they do, to the perishable things of it; but let "the children of light," the heirs of immortality, habitually look above and beyond it, to that "treasure in heaven which faileth not," that "inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away," not indeed the object of sense, but of faith, and surely reserved in heaven for us.

There is no great danger of leading any person by these representations to make his religion too much an object, so as to neglect the proper business of this life; though, with some persons of a peculiarly melancholy turn of mind, and especially after meeting with misfortunes in life, this has been the case. The constant presence of things seen and temporal, gives them a decided advantage over things unseen, though eternal, especially in these times, in which all monkish maxims are justly exploded, and the duties of all intelligent Christians connect them with the world and the business of it; so that we cannot have any serious apprehension of this inconvenience, which, however, it is proper to guard against. Indeed, I cannot conceive that any of those whom I call rational Christians, whose religion is free from the gross absurdities that have long prevailed in the Christian world, and which have brought it into the state of discredit in which it now is, are in any danger of this extreme; and these are the only persons by whom I have any expectation that an address from me will be attended to.

Lastly, let the rational Christian, who justly disclaims such doctrines as those of original sin, arbitrary predestination, the Trinity, and vicarious satisfaction, as the grossest corruptions of his religion, and the principal cause of its present rejection, (and which on this account his regard for Christianity requires that he should take every opportunity of exposing,) be equally prepared to meet the too vehement



zeal of the defenders of these doctrines (who are at present the great majority of the nominally Christian world), persons who will not scruple to treat him as a deist or atheist; and also the hatred of the real deists and atheists of the age. For if he be zealous and active in promoting what he deems to be pure Christianity, their sentiments concerning him will not deserve a softer name. However the malignity of both are alike insignificant, considering the great object we have in view, and they are infinitely overbalanced by the solid satisfaction which arises from the cordial esteem of a small number of judicious Christian friends, who will approve of our conduct, and join us in it; to say nothing of the exquisite delight which arises from the consciousness of a steady and undaunted pursuit of what is true and right, the hope we entertain of the approbation of our Maker, and the glorious reward of immortality.

## SUPERIOR VALUE OF REVEALED RELIGION.

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So little of religion, properly so called, have men ever derived from the light of Nature, and so little are those who reject Revelation really influenced by any religious principle, that the true state of the question, in fact, is, whether it be better for man to have the religion that is taught in the Scriptures, or none at all. They who reject revelation may not absolutely, and in words, reject the belief of a God and of a providence; (though we see in the example of the French philosophers, and many others, that this is generally the case;) they are not influenced by that belief. Nor can we wonder at this, when they certainly have not, in fact, any expectation of a future state, which, as I shall shew, was never taught to any useful purpose but by revelation. Religion implies the belief of the being and providence of God, and such a respect for the will of God as will effectually control a man's natural inclinations, and direct his conduct; restraining him from irregularities to which he is naturally prone, and exciting him to actions to which he is naturally averse. But as men in general are governed either by strong natural appetites, or a view to their interest, it cannot be expected that virtue alone, without any hope of future reward or punishment, can have such charms for them, that they will abandon their pleasure, their ease, or their advantage, for the pure love of it. Supposing that men might arrive at a knowledge of the will of God with respect to their conduct in life; they would not feel any sufficient obligation to conform to it, without the great sanction of future rewards and punishments. Mere authority, as that of a pa-

rent, or of a magistrate, is little or nothing without the power of rewarding and punishing. Nothing, therefore, but a firm belief in a future state of retribution can be expected to restrain men from giving into those indulgences to which they have a strong propensity.

1. With respect to every article of religion, the light of nature is far from being sufficiently clear and distinct, so as to be inferred with certainty by the most intelligent of men. With respect to what is most essential to human happiness, the wisest of men do not appear to have been, in fact, superior to the bulk; having, in a variety of respects, laid down the most erroneous rules for the conduct of men. Plain as the most important maxims of morality are, there is not one of them, but what the most enlightened not only of the ancient philosophers, but of modern unbelievers, have controverted. What we call conscience, and which we might expect to be a better guide, in this respect, than even reason, is by no means the same uniform principle in all men. It is formed by various associations of ideas, depending on the circumstances of our education, so that things which absolutely shock some persons, are not felt as at all improper by others. There is, therefore, something wanted superior to the dictates of reason, or natural conscience; and this can only be revealed religion, or the authority of our Maker, which must be obeyed without reasoning. Men will, no doubt, dispute even about the will of God, when it is most clearly revealed, as they do concerning the most express laws that are ever made by men; but if this be done with respect to the articulate voice of God, it will be done to a much greater extent, and with much more plausibility, to the inarticulate voice of nature, which every person will interpret as he is previously inclined.

If, when men are hurried on by passion or swayed by interest, they will transgress such positive and acknowledged commands, as thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, &c., as we see that, in fact, they do, it will not, however, be without reluctance and remorse; and therefore, trans-

gressions will be less frequent and less flagrant, and repentance and amendment may be more reasonably expected to follow. But, where no such positive command is acknowledged to exist, and the voice of nature alone is to be consulted about the proper conduct of life, most men will mistake their own inclination for the voice of nature, and consequently sin without reluctance or remorse. Of this it would be easy to give instances in the clearest of all cases; but this would take up too much of our time, and something of this was mentioned in my last discourse.

2. Still less would men, by the mere light of nature, have ever attained to any satisfactory conclusion with respect to the ultimate design of the Author of nature in the formation of man. I mean the prolongation of his existence beyond the grave. On this most interesting of all questions nature is altogether silent. Judging from appearances, as the brutes die, so does man; and all his faculties and powers die with him. That at death any thing escapes, unaffected by this catastrophe, is a mere arbitrary supposition, unsupported by any appearance, or probability of any kind.

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Supposing that it were possible, by the mere light of nature, to arrive at the belief of a future state; yet judging from present appearances, it could not be the future state announced in the Scriptures, a state in which virtue will find an ample recompence, and vice its just punishment, but only such a life as this and in all other respects resembling the present; which is the belief of the North-American Indians, and most other barbarous nations. If, because we dislike any thing in the present system, we entertain an idea that the inconvenience complained of will be removed in a future state; where is the evidence that, under the same powers or principles of nature, whatever they are, things will be ordered in a better manner? Is it possible to infer from what we see (and we have nothing else by which to guide our conjectures), that those evils which the Author of nature has thought

proper, for whatever reason, to introduce or to permit here, will not be continued there also? If we say, that it is not agreeable to justice that good and bad men should be treated as they are here; where is the evidence, from any present appearances, that the Author of nature intended that they should ever be treated otherwise? Left to the light of nature, we could only reason from what we know, and this would lead us to expect that, if there be any life after death, it will be similar to the present. It is only from the express assurance of the Author of nature, communicated by revelation, that we believe the future state will be better than the present, that in it the righteous will be fully rewarded, and the wicked punished. It is evident, therefore, that when we abandon revelation, we give up all religion properly so called, all that can have any salutary influence on the hearts and lives of men.

3. With respect to men, there is certainly a great advantage in precepts and commands, promises and threatenings, being delivered in *words*, proceeding as from a real person, it being by this means that instructions are delivered with the greatest distinctness. It may, indeed, be said, and with truth, that nature speaks to men and that nature teaches and nature threatens; but, besides that the information is more indistinctly communicated, it is in a manner less apt to make an impression and command respect. It is, therefore, of great advantage that the attention of men be directed to something beyond mere nature, viz. to the Author and Lord of nature; and that he be considered not as an allegorical personage, but a real, intelligent Being, capable of communicating his will in words, and such signs as men are daily accustomed to, and apt to be impressed by.

Besides, all men feel an unavoidable propensity to address themselves to the Being on whom they depend; and without some mode of intercourse with him, they would soon lose sight of him, as a child would of his father, if he never saw him, and had no access to him. Without an idea of God,

different from what we could collect from the contemplation of nature, there would be no such thing as *prayer*. Indeed, unbelievers in revelation ridicule the idea of prayer as unnatural and absurd, though all nations, without exception, have had recourse to it; which is a clear proof that it is natural, as every thing that is universal must be.

Authority is best supported by a mixture of *affection*, but there cannot be any thing of this except towards a being resembling other beings which have been the object of our affection, and which have engaged our confidence. And in revelation, but by no means in nature, the Supreme Being appears to us in the familiar character of a parent, — a person with whom we can have communication who may be conceived to be always present with us, who encourages us to address ourselves to him, who always hears us, and sometimes answers us. By this means God easily becomes the object of real affection and attachment. Here we find a solid foundation for love and fear, which are the chief motives for men's actions.

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4. They who give so decided a preference to the light of nature, the appearances of which are uniform, to that of revelation, which supposes an occasional departure from the usual course of nature, betray their ignorance of the nature of man, by whom all uniform appearances are apt to be disregarded, but who never fail to be struck by what is unusual. Does not every human being see the regular rising and setting of the sun, the periodical returns of summer and winter, seed-time and harvest; but how few ever think of the wisdom or benevolence of these appointments! They content themselves with observing effects, and directing their conduct by them, without ever reflecting on the cause. But whenever any thing unusual happens, when comets are seen, or eclipses of the sun or moon take place, their attention is forcibly arrested; and after reflecting on the cause of the extraordinary appearances, they may be induced to give some attention to those



that are constant. I shall illustrate this by a case which I have put on a former occasion.

Let a person unacquainted with clocks, watches, and other machines, be introduced into a room containing many of them, all in regular motion. He sees no maker of these machines, and knows nothing of their internal structure; and as he sees them all to move with perfect regularity, he may say, on the principles of the atheistical system, that they are automata, or self-moving machines; and so long as all these machines continue in regular motion, and he knows nothing of the making of them, or the winding of them up, this theory may appear plausible.

But let us suppose that, coming into this room again and again, and always attending to the machines, he shall find one of them much out of order, and that at length its motion shall entirely cease; but that, after continuing in this state some time, he shall again find it in perfect order, moving as regularly as ever. Will he not then conclude that some person, whom he has not seen, but probably the maker of the machines, had been in the room in his absence? The restoration of motion to the disordered machine would impress his mind with the idea of a maker of them, in a much more forcible manner than his observing the regular construction and uniform motion of them. It must convince him of the existence of some person capable of regulating, and, therefore, probably of making these machines, whether he should ever see this person or not.

Thus do miracles prove the existence of a God, in a shorter and more satisfactory manner than the observation of the uninterrupted course of nature. If there be a Being who can control the course of nature, there must be one who originally established it; in whatever difficulty we may still be left with respect to his nature, and the manner of his existence.

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5. No less are they mistaken who imagine that the evidences

of revealed religion have more of difficulty in them than those of natural religion ; by which we mean the arguments from nature, for the being, perfections, and providence of God. On the contrary, far greater difficulties occur with respect to these, than with respect to the others, and all that can be said is, that great difficulties must give way to greater. Far am I from supposing that the evidence for the being of a God is not demonstrative, since marks of design, with which the world abounds, necessarily imply a designing or intelligent cause. But notwithstanding this, we can never fully satisfy ourselves with respect to the objection of the atheist, that if the universe require a cause, this cause must require another ; and if the author of nature, or the being we call God, exist without a cause, so may the universe itself.

All we can say in answer to this is, that whatever difficulty we may labor under with respect to this subject, which will always be above our comprehension, the actual existence of a visible world, and of marks of design in it, cannot be denied, and, therefore, whether we be able to proceed any farther or not, we must acknowledge a designing cause ; otherwise we might say that a house had no architect, or a child no father. If the eye of a man require no designing cause, neither would a telescope, which is an instrument of a similar nature, evidently adapted to answer a similar purpose. And at this supposition every mind would revolt.

More and greater difficulties occur when we proceed to the consideration of the unity, the omnipresence, the constant agency, and, what is of more consequence still, the benevolence of the Supreme Being, on the principles of the light of nature. So forcibly were the minds of men, in the early ages, impressed with a view of the evils which abound in the world, and so inconsistent did they conceive them to be with the designs of a benevolent Author, that they supposed there was an original principle of Evil, independent of that of Good. And they who supposed there was a multiplicity of deities (to which they were led by the extent and variety they ob-

served in the works of nature), imagined some of them to be of a benevolent, and others of a malevolent disposition. That the Author of nature is one, that he is simply, invariably, and infinitely good, and that all the evils we see and experience are calculated to promote good, are great and sublime truths, which we derive from revelation only; though, on a strict examination, they appear not to be inconsistent with the appearances in nature.

On the other hand, the evidences of revelation are level to every capacity. That it is the Author of nature who interposes, must be evident from every interruption of the usual course of it; for no other than he who established the laws of nature can control them; and though there may be some difficulty in distinguishing some preternatural appearances from such as are merely unusual, this cannot be the case with respect to numberless others. If it was a fact that the Israelites walked through the Red Sea and the river Jordan; if all the first-born of the Egyptians, and the first-born only, of man and beast, died in one night, and that announced beforehand; if an articulate voice was actually heard to pronounce the ten commandments from Mount Sinai, so as to be heard by two millions of people, there could be no doubt of a Divine interposition in any of the cases. And the same may be said of numberless other facts in the Scripture history. If the facts be ascertained, there can be no doubt concerning their cause.

Now, all facts may be ascertained by sufficient testimony, or that of a competent number of credible witnesses; that is, of persons who were in circumstances not to be imposed upon themselves, and who had no apparent motive to impose upon others. This is fully equal to the evidence of a man's own senses. Nay, there are many persons who would distrust their own eyes and ears, rather than those of other persons, who, they thought, were better judges than themselves.

Though single persons may be imposed upon in a variety of ways, or may take it into their heads, for reasons which it

is not in the power of any man to investigate, to impose upon others ; this can never be said to be the case with respect to thousands who believe, or attest, things evidently contrary to their interest and previous inclinations. That great numbers of persons, and others in succession to them (all of whom had sufficient opportunity to investigate any particular fact, which required no other evidence than that of the senses, and who were interested in the investigation, their fortunes or their lives depending upon it) should persist in their attestation of it would be a greater miracle, more contrary to what we know of human nature, than any fact contained in the Scripture history.

As to the evidence of a future state, what are all the arguments derived from the light of nature compared to that which is furnished by the gospel, which is therefore justly said to “bring life and immortality to light” ? There we see a person commissioned by God, teaching the doctrine with the greatest plainness and emphasis, enforcing it by miracles, among which was the raising of several persons from a state of death to life ; and, what was infinitely more, submitting to die himself in the most public and indisputable manner, and rising to life again at a fixed time. Had mankind in general been asked what evidence would satisfy them, they could not have demanded more.

Whether, therefore, we consider the precepts of religion, that is, the rules of a virtuous and happy life, the authority requisite to enforce the observance of them, the motives by which they are enforced, or the evidence of their truth, revealed religion has unspeakably the advantage of natural ; and therefore so far is the scheme of revelation from being improbable *à priori*, that it must appear such as a wise and good Being, who was acquainted with human nature, and wished to engage the attention of men, and impress their minds with sentiments of reverence of himself, and respect for such laws as were calculated to promote their greatest happiness, would adopt in preference to any other ; being the

best adapted to gain his end. It was of the greatest importance to mankind to be made acquainted with those moral principles and rules of conduct on which their happiness depended, and which they would never have discovered of themselves; to have their attention drawn to them in the most forcible manner, and to have the most satisfactory evidence of their truth; and this is what we find in revelation, and in revelation only. It is therefore, as the apostle justly calls it, "the wisdom and the power of God," though objected to and ridiculed by light and superficial men.

## DIVINE MISSION OF MOSES.

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SUCH a firm persuasion in the whole Jewish nation, circumstanced as they are well known to have been, on the supposition that the events above recited never took place, and that the written history of them is not authentic, would be a miracle of a much more extraordinary nature than any of those that are objected to, and a miracle without any reasonable object ; for what rational end could have been answered by such a supernatural infatuation (for it could not have been any thing less) as should induce a whole nation firmly to believe all the particulars that I have recited, viz. the account of all the plagues of Egypt, their passing through the Red Sea and the river Jordan, the Divine Being speaking to them from Mount Sinai, and this last instance of the miraculous fall of the walls of Jericho, without any human means, and that the books containing the history of these particulars were written and published while the memory of the things recorded in them was recent ; when, if the account had been fabulous, it must have been exceedingly easy to have exposed it ?

No nation in the world, not even the most credulous (and the Jews have always been the least so,) could have been imposed upon in so gross a manner. And this was not in one particular, but in many ; and those on the largest scale, the farthest in the world from resembling tricks of legerdemain, such as may be exhibited before a few persons in a private room. But, for the satisfaction of all mankind in future ages, it was requisite that those miracles, which ushered in the first dispensation of revealed religion, should be so circumstanced



with respect both to number and magnitude, as to be out of the reach of all reasonable objection, though not of mere cavil; and such is actually the case. We may even venture to say, that had the most skeptical person in the world been asked what he himself would have wished to have been done in order to satisfy him that the Author of nature had really interposed in the government of the world, he could not have pitched upon more striking things, as an evidence of it, than the ten plagues of Egypt, the passage of the Red Sea and the river Jordan, the articulate and audible voice from Mount Sinai, pronouncing not a few words only (for in that the hearing might be deceived), but so many as composed the ten commandments, and lastly, the falling of the walls of Jericho; all of them exhibited in the presence of a whole nation, and some of them even more nations than one.

In order to satisfy distant ages that such things as these really took place, what more could have been demanded than that the history of them should be committed to writing while the facts were recent; that solemn customs should be instituted at the very time for the purpose of commemorating them; that a nation the least disposed to the religion which all this apparatus was provided to establish, should receive the history as genuine, and reluctantly adopt the religion thus enjoined them; and that, notwithstanding their many deviations from it, owing to the seductive nature of the rites of other nations they should, by faith in this history, be brought back to the strict observance of it and continue in it to this day, a period of about four thousand years.

Nothing but a due attention to this remarkable state of things is necessary to ensure the firm belief of the whole, to the most skeptical of mankind. And in due time we cannot doubt but that this due attention will be given to this history, and to that of the propagation of Christianity in conjunction with it; and then all mankind will, of course, become worshippers of the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, and of Jesus Christ; and this faith cannot but be attended with a

great improvement in the moral conduct of men, such as will ensure to them the truest enjoyment of this life, and immortal happiness in the life to come.

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Though the history of the deliverance of the Israelites from their state of bondage in Egypt, and their settlement in the land of Canaan, be an extraordinary one, abounding with miraculous events, which require a proportionably clear evidence, we have seen that the evidence of the facts is as full and clear as the case, or as any case, can require ; and the object of the whole scheme to which these events were an introduction, was of proportional importance. It was nothing less than to impress upon mankind the belief of the existence and providence of the one true God, the purity of his worship, the knowledge of our moral duty in this life, and of our expectations in another. For this great purpose it pleased God to make one nation the medium of all his communications with mankind, and to distinguish them by a particular providence that they might appear in the most conspicuous light to the whole world, and attract universal attention. This the nation of the Jews has done to a considerable degree in all ages. Originally they were situated in the very centre of all the civilized nations of the world, and as civilization extended, they by one means or another became most wonderfully dispersed through all countries ; and at this day they are almost literally every where the most conspicuous, and in the eye of reason and religion, the most respectable nation on the face of the earth.

It has been by means of prophets of this nation, and especially Jesus Christ, that the world has been recovered, as far as this recovery has taken place, from the deplorable state of superstition and idolatry into which it was universally sunk. This nation had originally as much to learn concerning God, a providence, and a future state, as any other, and they had not naturally any better sources of information ; but having been taught of God, they or their disciples are the instructors of

all the world ; and the lessons they give us are equally instructive, whether they themselves have suffered for their disobedience or flourished in consequence of their obedience. And the most important and convincing of all the lessons they are destined to give the world, what we have reason to believe will put an end to all infidelity, will be the result of their promised restoration to their present desolated country, from their present miserable, despised, and dispersed condition ; for who but he who alone can see into futurity, could foresee an event so distant and so complicated ? And as their dispersion and preservation correspond, \* \* \* with such wonderful exactness to ancient prophecies, there is no reasonable cause of doubt but that their restoration and future flourishing state will correspond to the many predictions concerning it, with equal exactness. With those who, for want of attention (for it cannot be owing to any thing else), are unbelievers at present, the issue of the whole must rest on this future event, which cannot fail to arrest and most forcibly engage the attention of all mankind.

## THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST.

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THE very character of Jesus Christ is so exceedingly unlike any other character whatever in the whole history of mankind; there is something in it so remarkably great and extraordinary, especially such an amazing mixture of dignity and condescension; that we cannot suppose that such men as the Evangelists should have conceived it, or have supported it so uniformly as they have done on a great variety of occasions. The fact demonstrates that they must have had an original to copy after. In this case they must have written from their memories, and not from imagination.

I would not scruple to appeal to any person, whose moral sentiments have not been perverted, whether he can possibly reconcile the character of Christ, the doctrines which he taught, and his general conduct, with that of an enthusiast or an impostor, and consequently whether his history does not on this account bear internal marks of truth. He taught and laboriously inculcated the precepts of the purest morality. He did not puzzle his hearers with subtle distinctions in morals, but insisted chiefly upon great and general principles, as the love of God, the love of mankind, and universal purity of heart, which are calculated to form a complete character, adapted to every station and condition in life; and he more especially enforced those virtues which are the least ostentatious, but the most essential to true greatness and excellence of character; viz. the forgiveness of injuries, humility, contentment, and resignation to the will of God.

He never consulted his own ease or pleasure, but constantly labored and felt for others, going about doing good to the souls and bodies of men. He spared neither the faults of his friends, nor the vices of his enemies, though the former were ever so dear to him, and the latter ever so powerful and inveterate. He discovered the most astonishing wisdom and presence of mind, whenever ensnaring questions were put to him. He sought no worldly emoluments or honors, but persisted in a course of life which rendered him in the highest degree obnoxious to those who were in power; and when he deemed the great purpose of his useful life to be accomplished, he no longer secreted himself from the malice of his persecutors, but in a firm belief, and with a peremptory declaration, that he should rise to the most distinguished greatness, and that he should raise all his disciples and friends to similar honors in a future life, he submitted, with inimitable calmness and composure, to a most cruel and ignominious death.

If there be any truth in history, all this, and much more than this was unquestionably fact. Now, what is there in human nature, or in the history of mankind, that can lead us to imagine that the man who could act this part should solemnly assert that he was commissioned by God to do it without really having such a commission? A good man will immediately say, if Divine interpositions be possible in themselves, and if God has ever spoken by man, Jesus Christ must certainly have been the man; and an intelligent person perceive that the time in which he lived was the most proper time for his appearance. The man whose life and conversation is agreeable to the gospel, and who feels that he enjoys the advantages of his being and condition, to the greatest perfection, in consequence of it, must feel what will be to him the most irresistible evidence, that the gospel proceeds from the Giver of every good and perfect gift. He has the witness in himself, and has peace and joy in believing.

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Let all these circumstances be duly considered, the ob-

scure birth and mean occupation of Jesus, in a distant and despised country; his high pretensions to be the Jewish Messiah, without any assumption of kingly power, universally deemed to be most essential to that character; his claim to a kingdom, though not of this world, and to the power of raising the dead and judging the world, when he had nothing but the certain prospect of a violent death before him; his undertaking to overthrow all the religions of the heathen world, firmly attached as the several nations were to them, — religions which had kept their ground, from time immemorial, notwithstanding a long period now boasted of as the most enlightened of any till the present; when there had not been from the beginning of the world an example of any nations voluntarily changing their religion; his holding out to his disciples nothing but persecution in this world and happiness in another; his having no secrets; his discovering no anxiety about the evidences of his divine mission, joined with his calm good sense, his exalted piety, his general benevolence, and the strong affection he always showed to his friends and followers; let all these circumstances, I say, be considered, and, without attending to his miracles and his success, it must surely be thought impossible that this man could have been an impostor, and meant to deceive the world. This internal evidence added to external, on which I have already enlarged, viz. from miracles and prophecy, must be abundantly sufficient to satisfy any reasonable and candid inquirer, with respect to the truth of Christianity, and of revealed religion in general.

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Thus have I given a sketch of the history of Jesus, from which we may form a just idea of his real character; and let those who are best acquainted with human nature say, whether it does not bear every mark of true greatness, even exceeding any that ever existed before or since. Jesus appears to have been free from every human weakness, and to have been actuated by every sentiment that is justly entitled to the



denomination of great ; as being remote from common attainments, and arising from the greatest comprehension of mind which is only acquired by just and enlarged views of things, respecting alike God and man, this life and another.

To persons of sufficient knowledge and candid reflection, this consideration affords satisfactory proof of the truth of Christianity. The Evangelists were not men who were capable of devising such a character as this, or of inventing a series of actions and discourses indicating such a character. It is a great *unique*, of which they could not have formed any conception.\* And if such, indeed, was the character of Jesus, the question to the philosophical inquirer is, How could it have been formed ? For so remarkable an effect must have had an adequate cause. The answer is obvious. It could only have arisen from the firmest persuasion, in the mind of Jesus, of a divine mission, and consequently, of a great future reward, which would abundantly overbalance all the sufferings of this life.

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\* "What sweetness, what purity in his manners ! What an affecting gracefulness in his delivery ! What sublimity in his maxims ! What profound wisdom in his discourses ! What presence of mind, what subtilty, what truth in his replies ! How great the command over his passions ! Where is the man, where the philosopher, who could so live, and so die, without weakness, and without ostentation ? Where could Jesus learn, among his competitors, that pure and sublime morality, of which he only hath given us both precept and example ? Shall we suppose the Evangelic History a mere fiction ? Such a supposition, in fact, only shifts the difficulty without obviating it. It is more inconceivable that a number of persons should agree to write such a history, than that one only should furnish the subject of it. The Jewish authors were incapable of the diction, and strangers to the morality contained in the Gospel, the marks of whose truth are so striking and inimitable, that the inventor would be a more astonishing character than the hero." — Rousseau's *Letter to the Archbishop of Paris*, 1763, p. 63.

## THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY A PROOF OF ITS TRUTH.

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I would farther observe, that this state of things affords a strong presumptive proof of the truth of Christianity. The heathen religion had every advantage of antiquity, learning, and power ; and yet could not prevail against the new religion, with the heavy disadvantage of having a crucified Jew for its founder. Christianity had no advantage from power, till by its own evidence only, and in opposition to every kind of power, it had prevailed so much as to make it the interest of the ruling powers to espouse it.

With respect to the conduct of Divine Providence, I would observe, that the sufferings of Christians, as well as those of Christ himself, though so great and of such long continuance, were necessary to the firm establishment of Christianity ; and that this was necessary to the happiness of mankind in future ages. For, to the confirmation of their faith it was absolutely necessary, that no person, to the end of time, should ever be able to say, that Christianity had established itself in the world by means of power, of policy, or of learning ; and that its evidences had not been rigorously examined at a time when every means of examination were existing, and also when both its friends and enemies were sufficiently interested in the examination.

Now the persecution of Christians, from the very origin of their religion at Jerusalem, in the very midst of its most inveterate enemies, and for more than two centuries after this, through the whole extent of the Roman empire (the

power of which over all its subjects was by its constitution perhaps greater than any that had ever existed in the world before, or that has existed, even since); a period also that was far from being unfavorable to learning and inquiry, not preventing, but evidently promoting the spread of Christianity; is the most incontestable proof, that neither arguments, nor force, though both were exerted to the utmost, could prevail against it. On the other hand, the Christians, who had no alternative but abandoning their religion or their lives, would not certainly choose the latter without what appeared to them to be sufficient reason, and such as they had not taken up lightly, and without the most careful examination. Because we do not see that, in any other cases, men deliberately throw away their lives; and especially that they submit to long-continued torture, without cause.

This was the state of things between the friends and the enemies of Christianity, while the facts were recent, capable of the most easy investigation, and the witnesses were numerous. And that they who did inquire with a proper temper of mind were really satisfied with respect to these facts, is evident from their continuing to profess themselves Christians notwithstanding all the discouragements they lay under, and by their daily making converts of others. It is of the greatest importance to observe, that the things to be examined were plain *facts*, with respect to which one man's understanding is just as good as that of any other. . Whatever learning or genius could do was at first entirely against Christianity, because its origin was wholly with the illiterate; but at length the learned themselves, of every class, attached as they were to their respective favorite systems, were induced to abandon them in favor of a religion which, both on account of its tenets and of its founder and preachers, they had at first held in the greatest contempt.

A man who can say that, in these circumstances, Christianity made its way in the world, as it is known to have done before the reign of Constantine, without its being

founded on truth, must say that human nature was not the same thing then that it is now. And the man who can seriously assert this, will not be much attended to by other men. He must, in fact, believe infinitely more miracles, and of a more stupendous nature, than the Christian admits, and these both without evidence and without an object. He must be a believer in the absolute and proper infatuation of the greater part of the subjects of the Roman empire for the three first centuries: nothing less than this will account for unquestionable facts, upon his hypothesis.

I must observe again, and enlarge a little upon the observation, that the things to be examined into by the friends or the enemies of Christianity, were not truths of an abstract or metaphysical nature, with respect to which any man or any number of men may form wrong judgments, and become tenaciously attached to them; but simply the truth of facts, which it requires nothing more than common sense to judge of; and likewise such an application of common sense, or understanding, as all men are continually exercising, and therefore with respect to which they are the least liable to make a mistake, and form a wrong judgment.

What they had to inquire into was simply this; whether Christ, with whom many of them were personally acquainted, wrought real miracles, whether he rose from the dead, and whether the apostles and others continued to work miracles in support of his divine mission afterwards. With the truth or untruth of these facts, the apostles themselves and all their contemporaries must either have been acquainted, or might easily have satisfied themselves. They could not therefore have been imposed upon themselves with respect to the facts; nor can it be imagined that the thousands of that generation who suffered, and many of whom died, in the cause of Christianity, could have any motive to impose upon others. We do not indeed think it necessary to trouble ourselves to investigate the causes of the sentiments and conduct of single persons, or of a few persons; because their faculties may be de-

ranged, or they may have been subjected to such particular influences as cannot possibly be known, except perhaps to those who have attended them from their infancy, and have been acquainted with their whole history. But this can never be said of so many persons, of all descriptions, as are well known to have embraced Christianity in the very age of the apostles, except by persons whose own minds are deranged, and therefore whose objections it is to no purpose to consider, or reply to.

But supposing the thousands and tens of thousands who embraced Christianity in the age of the apostles, to have been properly infatuated so as to believe that they actually saw and heard things that had no existence ; the next generation had sufficient leisure and sufficient opportunity to inquire into the facts, and this most extraordinary one, of the infatuation of their predecessors, among the rest ; and they were sufficiently interested so to do, when, if they embraced Christianity, they had nothing before them but the fate of preceding Christians. Yet we see that the inquiries that were made in the second generation, and all the succeeding ones, after the apostles, continually added to the number of Christians ; who kept uniformly increasing, among the learned and unlearned, the high and the low, the rich and the poor, till, notwithstanding all their hardships, they, or their friends, became the more powerful part of the Roman empire.

To suppose that Christianity could have propagated itself in this manner, without being founded in truth, is to suppose, as I observed before (and because it cannot be too much attended to, I mention it again) more miracles, and those of a more extraordinary nature, than are believed by Christians ; miracles of which no evidence can be given, and for which no reason can be assigned. For it must be supposed that all these innumerable converts to Christianity in the early ages imagined that they had heard and seen what they never had heard or seen ; or that they had inquired into the truth of recent facts, when they had made no inquiry at all, and that

they sacrificed their ease, their liberty, their property, and many of them their lives, for a mere fancy, an illusion of the brain. Their minds must therefore have been under a proper and miraculous infatuation, and for no purpose but to subject them to the most grievous sufferings, and to delude mankind in all future ages.

Now, between this strange and incredible supposition, and the truth of the gospel history, there is no medium. Admitting the facts which are related by the Evangelists, and the author of the Acts of the Apostles, every thing that has followed to the present times is easy and natural. The conversion of the first Christians, obstinate and reluctant as many of them were, the conversion of others by them, and all the subsequent events, have an adequate cause, so that without supposing any farther miracles, all things have come by a regular progress, each step of which is perfectly intelligible, to the state in which we see them to be at present. But on no other hypothesis can present appearances, what we ourselves now see, be accounted for. On the other supposition (which, if they reflect at all, must be that of all unbelievers) we see the most wonderful change in the history of the world, a revolution in the minds of men, of all nations and all descriptions, produced by supernatural delusion ; that is, a great effect without any cause, that a man in his sober senses would think of alleging for it.



RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE,—ADDRESSED TO THE YOUTH  
OF HIS CONGREGATION IN LEEDS.

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IT is the earnest wish of my heart, that your minds may be well established in the sound principles of religious knowledge ; because I am fully persuaded, that nothing else can be a sufficient foundation of a virtuous and truly respectable conduct in life, or of good hope in death. A mind destitute of knowledge (and, comparatively speaking, no kind of knowledge besides that of religion deserves the name), is like a field on which no culture has been bestowed, which, the richer it is, the ranker weeds it will produce. If nothing good be sown in it, it will be occupied by plants that are useless or noxious.

Thus, the mind of man can never be wholly barren. Through our whole lives we are subject to successive impressions ; for either new ideas are continually flowing in, or traces of the old ones are marked deeper. If, therefore, you be not acquiring good principles, be assured that you are acquiring bad ones ; if you be not forming virtuous habits, you are, how insensibly soever to yourselves, forming vicious ones ; and, instead of becoming those amiable objects in yourselves, and those valuable members of society, which nature and the God of nature intended that you should be, you will be at best useless cumberers of the ground, a dead weight upon the community, receiving support and advantage, but contributing nothing in return ; or you will be the pests of society, growing continually more corrupt yourselves, and contributing to the corruption of others.

Finding yourselves, therefore, in such a world as this, in which nothing is at a stand, it behoves you seriously to reflect upon your situation and prospects. Form then, the generous resolution (and every thing depends upon your resolution) of being at present what you will certainly wish you had been some years hence ; what your best friends now wish you to be ; and what your Maker has intended, fitted, and enabled you to be.

Above all things, be careful to improve and make use of the reason which God has given you, to be the guide of your lives, to check the extravagance of your passions, and to assist you in acquiring that knowledge, without which your rational powers will be of no advantage to you. If you would distinguish yourselves as men, and attain the true dignity and proper happiness of your natures, it must be by the exercise of those faculties which are peculiar to you as men. If you have no higher objects than the gratification of your animal appetites and passions, you rank yourselves with the brute beasts ; but as you will still retain that reflection which they have not, you will never have that unallayed enjoyment of a sensual life which they have. In fact, you are incapable of the happiness of brute animals. Aspire, therefore, to those superior pursuits and gratifications for which you were formed, and which are the prerogative and glory of your natures.

Let me urge you, my younger hearers, to a more than ordinary attention to regularity and propriety of behaviour, becoming men and Christians, that your conduct may be no disgrace to the rational and liberal sentiments which I trust you have imbibed. Let it be seen, that when God is considered as the proper object of reverence, love, and confidence, as the benevolent Father of all his offspring of mankind, and their righteous and impartial moral Governor, the principle of obedience is the most ingenuous and effectual. Cherish the most unfeigned gratitude to the Father of lights, that your minds are no longer bewildered with the gloom and darkness,

in which our excellent religion was, for so many ages, involved ; but let this consideration be a motive with you to walk as becomes so glorious a light. If your conduct be such as, instead of recommending your own generous principles, furnishes an excuse to others for acquiescing in their prejudices and errors, all the dishonor which is thereby thrown upon God, and the injury which will be done to the pure religion of Jesus Christ, by keeping it longer in a corrupted state at home and preventing its propagation abroad, will be your peculiar guilt, and greatly aggravate your condemnation.

Value the Scriptures, as a treasury of Divine knowledge, consisting of books which are eminently calculated to inspire you with just sentiments, and prompt you to right conduct ; and consider them also as the only proper authority in matters of faith.

In a thing so interesting to you as the business of religion, affecting the regulation of your conduct here, so as to prepare you for immortal happiness hereafter, respect no human authority whatever. Submit to those who are invested with the supreme power in your country, as your lawful civil magistrates ; but if they would prescribe to you in matters of faith, say, that you have but one Father, even God, and one Master, even Christ, and stand fast in the liberty with which he has made you free. Respect a parliamentary king, and cheerfully pay all parliamentary taxes ; but have nothing to do with a parliamentary religion, or a parliamentary God.

Religious rights and religious liberty are things of inestimable value. For these have many of our ancestors suffered and died ; and shall we, in the sunshine of prosperity, desert that glorious cause, from which no storms of adversity or persecution could make them swerve ? Let us consider it as a duty of the first rank with respect to moral obligation, to transmit to our posterity, and provide, as far as we can, for transmitting, unimpaired, to the latest generations, that generous zeal for religion and liberty, which makes the memory of our forefathers so truly illustrious.

So long as it shall please that God, in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways, to continue me in that relation, in which I think myself happy in standing to you at present, I trust that I shall not fail to endeavour to impress your minds with a just sense of what you owe to God, to your country, and to mankind. Let it be our mutual care to derive the most durable advantage from our present temporary connexion, by growing continually more established, strengthened, and settled in the habit and practice of all the virtues which become us as men and as Christians; that we may secure a happy meeting and mutual congratulation in the future kingdom of our Lord and Saviour.

## CHARACTER OF THE REV. RICHARD PRICE, D. D.

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WE are now, my Christian brethren, assembled on the mournful occasion of the decease of a truly excellent man ; one who stood in the endearing relation of pastor to this congregation,\* but in a much more important relation to his country, and even to the world. If, after this, I may add, as an excuse for those who have made choice of me to address you on the occasion, he was one with whom I had been connected by an acquaintance of more than thirty years, and an intimate friendship of more than twenty. In consequence of this, I have never failed to occupy his place of preacher to you, on my annual visits to the metropolis ; and if a circumstance, which adds something to the impression on my own mind, may be mentioned on the occasion, this is the very day on which, if our friend had been alive and well, I should of course have preached for him. Little did I expect, when I set out on my journey, that this would be his Funeral Sermon ; for at that time there were hopes of his recovery, and about a month before, there was no more appearance of his approaching dissolution, than there is of that of any of ours at present. For though he was not of a robust constitution, and was drawing toward the usual term of human life, he had of late years recovered a better state of health and spirits than had generally fallen to his share ; so that, judging by appearances, he might have lived happily to himself, and usefully to the world, many years longer. May the reflection lead us all to the true wisdom of considering our latter end, that we may hold ourselves in constant readiness for our summons hence ;

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\* At Hackney, near London.

since, at such an hour as we think not, that summons may come.

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The virtues of Dr. Price, I may say, without being charged with extravagant panegyric or flattery, which should be far from this sacred place, as it was remote from his pure and simple mind, will live in the memory not only of the present, but of future generations. For few persons in the private walks of life, in no public office or employment, and wholly remote from courts, were ever more generally known or respected. His labors made him in pretty early life the benefactor of mankind. Not only was his object in his more abstruse mathematical studies, the benefit of his countrymen, by reducing to greater certainty, and setting in a clearer light than had ever been done before, the doctrine of Annuities, and many interesting subjects, for which thousands in this country have reason to thank him; but so ardent was his zeal for the natural rights of men, and so forcibly and effectually did he plead the cause of liberty, civil and religious, that no inconsiderable proportion of the human race acknowledged his writings to have been of eminent use to their attainment of those great blessings; and the most august assembly in the world, by which I wish to be understood the National Assembly of France, have justly styled him the Apostle of Liberty. Not that he added much to the clearness of its principles; but strongly feeling their force, he inspired all his readers with the same ardent love of it and zeal for it, so as to make liberty appear more desirable, and tyranny more detestable; and in this respect, though dead, he yet speaketh.

In the writings of Dr. Price, men and citizens may ever see their rights and magistrates their duty; and so plainly and forcibly are these lessons given, that our children may understand and feel them. That the great end of civil society and the object of all civil government is the public good; that every form of government is excellent in proportion as it is adapted to gain this end; that all persons employed and



paid by the public, are the servants of the public, that they are accountable to the public, and of course punishable for their neglect of duty, are now considered as axioms, as indisputable as any in geometry; and the writings of Dr. Price have contributed more than those of any other person, I may almost say, living or dead, to make them generally understood, and what is more, to their importance being truly felt.

It may be considered as a universal truth, that no man can rise to great eminence without having enemies in proportion to it; and few men have had more of this honorable appendage to real merit than Dr. Price. He long stood the object of reproach and calumny to the interested tools of power, to the prejudiced and to the timid. And on this account some may think it necessary to apologize for his conduct, in the writings to which I now refer, especially as his profession was that of a preacher of the gospel of peace. But I cannot apologize for public virtue and public spirit, in any man. It is universally praiseworthy, and a just subject of encomium.

Whatever else we be, we are all members of society, and citizens of the world; and as such, we are bound to consult the public welfare, as far as we have an opportunity to promote it; which was eminently the case of Dr. Price. His character and his writings gave him access to men in power, and who have influence in public affairs, not only in England, but also in America, and in France, not to mention other countries; and his wise counsels were not always without effect. But persons in less conspicuous situations are justifiable, and more than justifiable, for their endeavours to serve the public, be they more or less attended to; and in every free, that is, in every equitable and just government, the voice of every man interested in it will be heard and attended to in proportion to his interest.

These duties respecting the public need not to interfere with those of a more private nature. Did our deceased friend, notwithstanding his attention to politics, neglect any part of his duty as a minister of the gospel, or a member of

society in any other respect? You know that he was ever exemplary in them all. Was the strain of his pulpit discourses ever factious? Did they tend to make you discontented with government, or inflame your passions against those who had the administration of it? You know the contrary. The mild but warm benevolence of his own heart he diffused into yours. It was his business and delight, on all occasions, to inculcate the great duties of piety and resignation to God, and good-will to all men, together with that happy equanimity which prepares the mind for all events, prosperous or adverse, public or private. You could not, I am confident, leave this place, after attending his services in it, without feeling yourselves more meek and placid, more disposed to forbearance and forgiveness, than to revenge.

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But from one species of reproach and abuse, to which most declaimers against government are subject, Dr. Price was universally exempted. His bitterest enemies, in their greatest violence, never taxed him with it. I mean his having interested views. His patriotism, though warm, was ever of the purest kind, looking to nothing for himself; and when he had the freest access to men in power, never using it for his own emolument, or that of his nearest friends. In this situation he conferred favors, but never received any. So generally was his character in this respect known, that when he gave a great part of his time to the service of his country, in calculations, for judgment and accuracy in which he was the only man particularly looked up to by those who composed the legislature of his country, no pecuniary reward was ever thought of by him, or for him. He gave his labors in the same disinterested manner to several private societies who wished to establish funds for the benefit of their posterity, and in return had nothing but the warmest acknowledgments for the most important services. In calculations of this kind the merit of Dr. Price stands unrivalled, and would be alone suf-

ficient to transmit his name with the greatest respect to future ages.

In this disinterested manner did Dr. Price uniformly act, though his circumstances were by no means what the world would call affluent, considering that he lived near the metropolis, and in the society of the most opulent in it. But his style of life was of the simplest kind, and he was rich, as almost any man may be, by his moderation and economy. From a moderate income he had a very considerable surplus, in the distribution of which he was most judicious and liberal. When, in my great intimacy with him, I was some years ago remonstrating against one particular instance of his liberality, he told me he made it a rule to expend one fifth of his income in some form of charity, and only wished to produce the greatest good by it ; but that, had he had children, he would have contented himself with giving a tenth.

Here, my brethren, is an example worthy of imitation by the most opulent among you, and which, as Dr. Price is now dead, I think it not amiss to hold out to you, and to the world. But, alas ! the greater part of those who are possessed of wealth, instead of enlarging their fortunes and their means of doing good, by diminishing their wants and their expenditure, are ever stretching them to the utmost bounds and beyond the bounds of their incomes ; though the evident consequences of this conduct, is their own infinite embarrassment, and a total incapacity of doing good to others. This, however, is a duty incumbent upon all who have, or who might command, the means of it ; a duty enjoined by the great Being who, for the wisest purposes, viz. for promoting general virtue, for the exercise of patience, humility, and gratitude in some, and of generosity in others, has appointed that inequality which we see to prevail in the conditions of men on the face of the whole earth.

Such glorious characters, however, there are in the world, though little known in the bustle and glitter of public life ;

persons who spend even more on others, than they do on themselves; who really consider themselves as merely stewards of the bounty of Divine Providence and almoners of the Almighty, entitled only to their portion for their care of the distribution. Such was Mr. Howard, the intimate friend of Dr. Price; and such are others, whose names it is their wish to remain unknown, but which will be proclaimed at the resurrection of the just, when they who have sowed bountifully shall also reap bountifully, and when they who are rich now, but who make no generous or wise use of their riches, will wish that they had been poor. The good deeds of such men, though buried in oblivion now, all live unto God. They are preserved in the book of his remembrance, and in that book the characters are indelible, as the volume is imperishable.

Dr. Price's piety, which is the surest foundation of all virtue, was no less, though it was less conspicuous, than his benevolence. The peculiar fervor of his devotion, ever expressed in the most natural and unaffected manner, you must have constantly observed in the pulpit, and in all his public services of which prayer made a part; and the deep sense that he had of the constant presence and providence of God was always apparent in his conversation on religious subjects. But such marks of strong devotional feelings as he discovered when he was under less constraint, in the more private devotions of his family (of which some of his more familiar religious friends must have been occasionally witnesses), I have seldom seen in any other person; and as he was too apt to look at the dark side of things, sentiments of the deepest reverence, and the most entire submission to the Divine will, were most predominant on such occasions. I can compare the earnest manner in which he always expressed himself at those times, to nothing but what we may conceive to have been that of our Saviour in the garden, when, in prayer to his Almighty Father, he said, Not my will, but thine be done.—No doubt he felt more intensely still in his more private

devotions, when, with or without the use of words, he poured out his whole heart to his Father who seeth in secret. It was evident to all his acquaintance, that his devotion was both intense and habitual, the idea of God and his providence being never long absent from his mind. No person well acquainted with Dr. Price could say, that rational sentiments of Christianity are unfriendly to devotion.

Perhaps the sentiments of no man's mind were ever more clearly perceived in the natural expression of them, than those of Dr. Price. It was impossible to converse with him, and not apply to him the character which our Saviour gave to Nathaniel, of a man without guile. Such simplicity of manners, with such genuine marks of perfect integrity and benevolence, diffused around him a charm, which the forms of politeness can but poorly imitate. Accordingly, his society was coveted by those who were bred in courts, as superior to any thing they found in the most polished circles.

As a preacher, without any thing that is termed oratory, he never failed to gain universal attention; and what he delivered in his plain and artless manner, coming evidently from the heart, made a deeper impression than those discourses which are heard with the loudest bursts of applause. I am confident that all that you who have attended upon his ministry can wish for in a speaker, is such a delivery as his, which to appearance had nothing in it that was striking, or peculiarly excellent, because it was unstudied.

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Notwithstanding Dr. Price's ability, which however was the least article in his praise, and the confidence which, on that account, he might be supposed to place in his own judgment, which no man took more pains to form, he was remarkably diffident of himself, and in public controversy his naturally ingenuous temper led him to express his doubts in the frankest manner; and though, when he thought his argument well-founded, he made use of pretty strong language, he did not think the worse of his antagonists in a moral respect.



The topics on which he engaged in controversy with myself were those on which it is well known that he laid peculiar stress. He thought some of them to be of great importance even in a practical view; and yet my openly differing from him with regard to them, made no change whatever in his respect for me. Nay, if I might judge from appearances, which in him were never deceitful, it increased that respect. Nor, which is another usual effect of public controversy, did he in consequence of it become more tenacious of the opinions for which he contended. Judging by the same sure appearances, he became in consequence of it more doubtful, and on many occasions, with his usual ingenuousness, never scrupled to acknowledge it; though it did not appear that his opinions were materially changed. That this circumstance did not diminish my respect for him, is not to be wondered at. Besides I did not lay the same stress on the points in dispute that he did. In real candor, I question whether Dr. Price ever had a superior.

The greatest defect in Dr Price arose from an excess of this amiable virtue of candor. He could hardly see a fault in those to whom he was much attached. Of this pleasing foible I myself was happy to have the advantage.

Dr. Price's extreme unwillingness to disoblige any person, was the occasion of no small trouble and embarrassment to him. His well known public spirit and benevolence brought upon him many applications for advice and assistance and many requests of personal interviews, which he did not know how to decline. In this case alone did he want firmness of mind. In the cause of truth or public liberty, no man had less concern about what any person thought, or said of him; but he could not without great pain to himself, do any thing that had the appearance of being unkind, or uncivil. On this principle he sacrificed much of his own ease and satisfaction to that of others. He often complained to me, and I doubt not to others of his friends, of his want of resolution in this



respect, and the great loss of time, which he could very ill spare, by this means.

Humility is a virtue nearly allied to candor and benevolence, and I never knew a person less sensible of his own excellencies, or so little elated by the great celebrity to which he attained (and this was greater than any dissenting minister ever acquired before him), as Dr. Price was.

But with the greatest disposition to please, and to comply with others as far as he innocently could, he never made a sacrifice of his opinions to complaisance, but on all proper occasions openly avowed every important principle that he held. Conversing much with the world at large, and of course with many unbelievers, he always appeared a zealous Christian, and with bigots, a rational one; so that to the latter he was, from very early life, an object of dislike; and his zeal for what are usually called liberal opinions in religion, was as great as theirs for those of an opposite kind.

## CHARACTER OF THE REV. ROBERT ROBINSON.

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HE was a wonderful example of a man rising to considerable eminence by his own exertions. His education was no other than that of a grammar school,\* and his first serious turn was given to him by the preaching of Mr. Whitefield.†

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\* Mr. Robinson was educated under the Rev. Joseph Brett, at Searning in Norfolk, where the late Mr. Norris, [who founded a Divinity Professorship at Cambridge,] the present Lord High Chancellor, [Thurlow], and most of the gentlemen of that county, received the rudiments of learning. There Mr. Robinson was taught the Latin, Greek, and French languages, and he was a great favorite with his master on account of his "large capacity, uncommon genius, and refined taste," which were the words his master used when speaking of him at twelve years of age. He added, that "he expected great honor from him in future life." This was when Mr. Robinson was intended for the church; and it does not appear that he was ever engaged in business. (*P.*) *Advertisement*. He was bound apprentice to "a hair-dresser in Crutched Friars" in 1749; but his master appears to have given up his indentures some time before the expiration of the term.—Dyer's *Mem.* p. 11. See *ibid.* pp. 8–11. *Brief Mem.* pp. xiii. – xv.

† See Dyer's *Mem.* pp. 18–25. In *Mon. Repos.* VII. 678, 679, I mentioned my too short acquaintance with this extraordinary man, and described a curious record in my possession. It is in a copy of Jennings's "Life of Cotton Mather." At the beginning of the book is written *Robert Robinson, 1754*, prefixed to the verse *Heb.* vi. 12. The

But he gradually devoted himself wholly to the work of the ministry among the Baptists, and in the discharge of the duties of it, especially in his labors among the lower ranks of people, he greatly distinguished himself. What you saw and heard of him here would give you no idea of what he had been. For, the disorder to which he had been more than a year subject, and which, it is said, was brought on by intense, and I may say intemperate application to study, had weakened his mind, as well as his body, and, as is always the case, much more than he was himself aware of; though he still retained a fluency of speech and a command of language, that few can boast. When he was in his prime, he used, without any art, or ostentation of oratory, perfectly to command the attention of his audience; and always speaking extempore, he could vary his style and address, according to his hearers, in a manner that was truly wonderful. His writings discover equal powers of imagination and of judgment. His Sermons, preached in the villages near Cambridge,[\*] are remarkable for their plainness and propriety. But at the time that they were composed he had not acquired all the sentiments that he had before he died. What most of all distinguished Mr. Robinson was his earnest love of truth, and his laborious search after it. Educated in Calvinistic

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account of his birth and parentage, and what he considered as his *new birth*, is thus written by himself at the end of the book :

“ Robertus, Michaelis Mariæque Robinson Filius.  
 Natus Swaffhami, Comitatu Norfolkæ,  
 Saturni die, Sep 27, 1735.  
 Renatus Sabbati die, Maii 24, 1742,  
 Per prædicationem potentem Georgii Whitefield.  
 Et, gustatis doloribus Renovationis, duos annos menses  
 Que septem, absolutionem plenam gratuitamque  
 Per sanguinem pretiosam Jesu Christi  
 Inveni, (Tuesday, Dec. 10, 1755,) cui sit honor  
 Et gloria, in secula seculorum. Amen.”

[\* Republished in this country a few years since.]

principles, he was the greatest part of his life very zealous in the propagation of them. I myself remember hearing him many years ago explaining the Calvinistic doctrine of justification, to a crowded and very attentive audience in London. Mr. Lindsey's resignation of his living in the Church of England and his writings in defence of Unitarianism, exciting a good deal of attention, Mr. Robinson published a book entitled "A Plea for the Divinity of Christ," one of the most plausible of the treatises on that side of the question, and the only one that Mr. Lindsey thought proper to reply to. For this work Mr. Robinson was very much caressed by the friends of the established Church; and on this account, I believe it was, that he had the offer of considerable preferment in the Church of England, which, however, with great magnanimity, he rejected.\* Notwithstanding his long attachment to the doctrine of the Trinity, yet continuing to read and think on the subject, he came at length to change his opinion, and before he died he was one of the most zealous Unitarians.† The subject of the Divine Unity was generally uppermost in his mind, and he urged it not only in season, but, as you would observe, even out of season.

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Mr. Robinson has long been distinguished as a writer; and

\* "Handsome proposals were readily made him, but were modestly, though firmly, rejected. On Dr. Ogden's addressing him, 'Do the Dissenters know the worth of the man?' Robinson replied, 'The man knows the worth of the Dissenters.'" — *Dyer's Mem.* pp. 198, 199.

† I have the happiness to think that this important change in Mr. Robinson's sentiments was in some measure occasioned by my own writings. For in the only letter that I ever received from him (which was in answer to one that I was desired to write, in order to invite him to preach our charity sermon) he says what, without mentioning his name, I have already quoted in the *Preface* to my *Letters to Mr. Burn*: "I am indebted to you for the little I know of rational, defensible Christianity. But for your friendly aid I fear I should have gone from *enthusiasm* to *Deism*; but a faith founded upon evidence rests on a rock."

his zeal as a Dissenter soon brought upon him the peculiar indignation of the friends of the Establishment. Upon every occasion of any thing being brought before Parliament in favor of the Dissenters, his *Plan of Lectures on the Principles of Nonconformity* (which I would take this opportunity of recommending to you) has never failed to be produced by our enemies, as an evidence of our hostile intentions with respect to the established Church. But it is no proof of the excellence of that establishment, that so acute an observer as Mr. Robinson, and who, I believe, had himself been a member of it, should come to think so ill of it. Severe as his censures are, I have no doubt of their being perfectly just; and in matters of religion, there is certainly no room for complaisance. Let every thing of this nature be most rigorously examined, and let it stand or fall by its own merit.

I would particularly recommend to your imitation Mr. Robinson's exemplary conduct in the education that he gave to his numerous family, not only in religion, but in all branches of useful knowledge; by no means neglecting his daughters. To their understandings his good sense taught him to give the same cultivation as to those of his sons, that is, the highest of which they were capable. Getting over a vulgar and debasing prejudice (that women, being designed for domestic cares, should be taught nothing beyond them), and finding his daughters capable of it, he himself taught them the learned and the modern languages, and he got them instructed by others in mathematics and philosophy. Certainly, the minds of women are capable of the same improvement and the same furniture as those of men; and it is of importance that, when they have leisure, they should have the same resource in reading, and the same power of instructing the world by writing, that men have; and that, if they be mothers, they be capable of assisting in the instruction of their children; to which they have generally more opportunity to attend than the fathers.

In all labors proper for his station, and for the public,

Mr. Robinson was most abundant.\* In this let us imitate him. Whatever our respective callings may be, let us, like him, faithfully and assiduously discharge the duties of them. Our Master is now absent, but he will in due time make his appearance. May we so conduct ourselves, as not to be ashamed before him at his coming. Warned, more especially, by the suddenness of the death of Mr. Robinson, and that of many others of which we are continually hearing, let us see that we be always ready; since at such an hour as we think not, the Son of Man may come.

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\* To recommend just notions of civil government, he published, in 1782, that *Political Catechism* which was honored by the public censures of Burke. To serve the cause of justice and humanity, he prepared the petition, from Cambridge, against the Slave Trade: one of the earliest presented to the House of Commons; and in 1788, he preached and published a Sermon, entitled "Slavery inconsistent with the Spirit of Christianity," from Luke, iv. 18. The preacher happily remarks, that "a proclamation of liberty to captives meets the wishes of both sufferers and spectators, and grates only on the ears of a tyrant who makes slaves, and masters who hold them in servitude."



## MISCELLANEOUS THOUGHTS.

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IF we consider the great prize for which we contend, that life and immortality are set before us, we cannot think that we can sacrifice too much to it, though we should be required to abandon life and all the enjoyments of it. We are in reality, no Christians except in name, unless Christianity be the primary object with us, and every thing else be a secondary pursuit. And they who think they can give their time, their talents, and their heart to the world, and seldom think of any thing else, and yet imagine they may secure the happiness of heaven after all, will find that they miserably deceive themselves. This is the reason why our Lord says "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God," because riches naturally engage much of a man's thoughts, care, and affection, and leave him little time to attend to better things. Indeed, the rich seldom think that there are any better things than riches, even though they never find themselves happy or satisfied with them; on the contrary a true Christian will take more thought how to spend his wealth properly than to add to it. By this rule, then, let us try ourselves.

We ought therefore to consider well with ourselves, whether we are determined to maintain the profession and practice of Christianity at all risks. Without this we are no Christians, but merely men of the world, who follow the multitude which happens to be what is called Christian; but who from the same principle would have been pagans and Ma-

hommedans. To be Christians indeed, we must be so in principle and from reflection, weighing well the truth and value of the profession, and determined to give up every thing, even life itself, that may be required by it.

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The surest criterion of our advancing in real excellence and perfection of character, is our acquiring a disposition to think less of ourselves and of our own happiness, and more of that of others.

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If the zeal of this apostle, his unwearied labors, his patient suffering, and prudent conduct, could not save him from continual opposition, and even from those who professed the same gospel with himself, why should we wonder at the like happening at this day, when Christians are much more divided among themselves, and when there are consequently many more occasions of offence. It ought to satisfy every man, as it did the apostle Paul, that he can acquit himself to his own conscience, and to God who knows the heart. Whatever we suffer from friends or enemies, while we act in this manner, we shall be abundantly recompensed at a future day.

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If, therefore, I mean to follow Christ, I must be more especially upon my guard against adopting that mode of faith or practice which it is my interest, or which it is fashionable, for me to adopt; it being *à priori*, probable, that what "is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God." The true Christian must obey God, and not man; he must not "follow a multitude to do evil," and must be content to "take up his cross," suffer persecution, and follow Christ here, if he would reign with him hereafter.

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Let it appear that the principal object of your attention is the proper duty of your profession, and let no taste you may have for the polite arts, as music, painting, or poetry, nor a capacity for the improvements in science, engage you to make them more than an amusement to you, or, at the most, any more than an object of secondary consideration. Let not even the study of speculative theology prevent your applying yourself chiefly to the advancement of virtue among your hearers. Let your conduct demonstrate, that you consider one soul reclaimed from vicious habits, or even one person's mind confirmed in any good resolution, as a greater acquisition to you, than the detection of any speculative error, the illustration of any known truth, or the discovery of any new ones.

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How many are there who, in the most solemn forms, subscribe to articles of faith which they do not believe, when they would not on any account make a false declaration in any other form? This conduct, however, is such as no person can justify; and all that can be said in excuse for it is, that it is doing evil that good may come.

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To me, I cannot help saying, it appears that the present state of Christianity is rather critical, and very much requires to be looked into by all its real and sincere friends. Men of good sense and of cultivated minds in other respects, cannot but be aware of many things which are evidently absurd in the prevailing tenets of the great part of Christians; and while no real friend of Christianity has the courage to show them that the things they dislike and object to, do not belong to that religion, it can be no wonder that they conceive a prejudice against the whole scheme, and become secret, if

not open and avowed infidels. That this is the case at this day, not with the unthinking and profligate only, but with many persons of reading, of reflection, and of the most irreproachable conduct in life, is well known. It is also apparent, that the number of such persons is daily increasing; and unless some remedy be applied to the growing evil, we shall, in time, be in the condition of our neighbours the Papists, with whom the thinking men, in the church as well as among the laity, are generally infidels, and all the unthinking are bigots.

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It has pleased the Divine Being, for good and obvious reasons, not to make the terms of salvation so very determinate, as that a man shall be able to pronounce with absolute certainty concerning the future state of himself or others, while we are in this life. It is evidently the best for us to be never without the influence of hope and fear; and therefore all that we have authority to say from the Scriptures, is, that when we have a fixed resolution to do our duty, as far as it is known to us, we have a reason to hope; and that when we either have not that resolution, or when our virtuous purposes are easily overborne by the influence of temptation, we have reason to fear. This is the nearest that any man can judge, even in his own case; and by this rule let every man examine himself, though not with a view to church communion. All that others can see or judge is, whether a man's conduct in life be such as is unworthy of their society; that is, in this case, contradictory to his profession as a Christian, and such as would be in danger of corrupting or disgracing them.

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Much as I differ from Mr. Wesley in religious sentiments, I have the highest opinion of his integrity, and I consider his services of more importance than those of many benches of bishops. I doubt not he intends great good, and, in my opinion, he will be the cause, in the hands of Providence, of much more good than he intends or wishes.

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It is true I am an avowed enemy to the Church establishment of this country, but by no means to any who belong to it. I write against Calvinism, but have the greatest respect for many Calvinists, and wish to make them exchange their darkness for my light. I am also an enemy to atheism and deism, but not to atheists and deists. I have a particular friendship for many of them, in this country and in other countries, and I write to inform and reclaim them. There is nothing personal in all this. They think as unfavorably of my system as I do of theirs. Let points of difference be freely discussed. Truth will be a gainer by it. But let us respect one another, as we respect truth itself; love all and wish the good of all, without distinction. This is true candor, and consistent with the greatest zeal for our particular opinions.

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As the Indian said to the Spanish priest, who would have persuaded him to be baptized in the article of death, threatening that if he did not submit to that ceremony, he would certainly go to hell, whither all his ancestors went before him, that "he chose to go to his ancestors, rather than to any place whither the Spaniards went;" so, Sir, judging of the tree by its fruits, I shall willingly take my chance with pious, virtuous, and candid Unitarians, with such men as Dr. Lardner, Dr. Jebb, &c. who brought no railing accusa-

tions against any man (though sentenced by your church "without doubt to perish everlastingly") rather than with those who scruple no misrepresentation or abuse to promote their cause, though in itself it should be ever so good. Fearing God, and respecting his truth, I hope I shall never fear what man may say of me, or do to me; least of all in another world, where, happily, your power does not extend.

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If any writings can be said to authenticate themselves, by internal marks of their being written by the persons whose name they bear, and at the time to which their contents refer, they are the books of the Scripture. It is not possible for any person of tolerable judgment in such things, to read them with due attention, and not acknowledge this, whatever may be his opinion of them in other respects. There are, however, in all these books such genuine marks of integrity and piety, as must satisfy any reasonable person that no imposition or deception of any kind (if in their circumstances it had been possible, which it evidently was not) was intended by the writers. They relate nothing but what they knew or believed to be true, and, situated as they were, they could not have been deceived themselves; so that without external evidence (which however is abundant) all persons who feel as they felt with respect to God and man, cannot help receiving their testimony to the most wonderful of the facts they relate without hesitation. Writing from the heart, they wrote to the hearts of all persons whose characters are like their own.

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The doctrine of modern unbelievers, with respect to morals, is far from being a confirmation of what was so confidently advanced by their predecessors, concerning the clearness and sufficiency of the light of nature on that important



subject ; for they are discordant in the extreme, and many of them such as would have shocked Lord Herbert and Lord Shaftesbury, almost as much as they do Christians ; for, to say nothing of the little account the generality of unbelievers make of the vice of sensual indulgence of any kind, even the most unnatural, the latest writers of this class exclude gratitude from the rank of virtues, and deny the obligation of promises, oaths, and even of the bonds of matrimony, pleading for a community of women ; principles which, if acted upon, would soon throw the world into the greatest confusion, and reduce men to the condition of brute beasts, and in the end to universal hostility, though they are inconsistently advocates for universal peace.

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The moral uses of the very few positive institutions in the Christian religion, are sufficiently obvious ; but admitting that they were not so, it ought to suffice us that they are enjoined by a competent authority ; and the man who can knowingly transgress any one acknowledged command, though, to his apprehension, ever so unmeaning, is certainly destitute of respect to the authority by which it is enjoined, and of a principle of obedience in general ; which with respect to God, is in the highest degree criminal and dangerous. You do not yourselves always give to a servant, or a child, the reasons of your commands, and yet you justly expect implicit obedience ; and you would consider their peremptory disobedience as deserving of the severest punishment, though the thing itself should be ever so trifling.

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Better had it been for you to have believed in three, or three hundred gods, and those of wood and stone, than to believe in the one only living and true God, and, at the same

time, live as without him in the world, entirely thoughtless of his being, character, and government, as if you were not accountable to him for your conduct. Infinitely better were it for you to believe whatever the most stupid of mankind have believed concerning God, than disregard his laws, profane his name, or neglect his worship.

Better were it for you to have believed in a revengeful, implacable object of worship, than to believe in a God truly merciful and gracious, who freely, and for his goodness' sake only, forgives all the sincerely penitent, and has sent his Son to live and die in order to bring men to repentance, and, at the same time, not to be solicitous to become the proper objects of mercy, or not to imitate such an amiable pattern and be merciful as your Father who is in heaven is merciful; freely, and without any satisfaction, forgiving, as you yourselves hope to be forgiven. In short, better were it for you to believe all the absurdities of the Church of Rome than not to add purity of heart and life to purity of doctrine and worship.

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Think not, however, my brethren, that the most fervent zeal for what are apprehended to be the genuine doctrines of the gospel, is at all inconsistent with true Christian charity; which always judges of particular persons according to the advantages they have enjoyed, and of the final state of men by their sincerity only. And, for my own part, I have no doubt but that, though the Church of Rome be the proper Antichrist of the apostles, not only innumerable zealous papists but even some popes themselves, and since the time of the Reformation, will sit down with Luther, with Calvin and with Socinus, in the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Known unto God alone are the hearts of men; and the man who honestly pursues truth, and who acts according to the best lights that God gives him an opportunity of acquiring,

will be he whom the God of truth and uprightness will approve ; and none will suffer a greater or more just condemnation, than those who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

Much rather would I be in the case of many worthy persons in the Church of England, or the Church of Rome, who, at the same time that they are fully sensible of the corruptions and errors of the system in which they are entangled, are not able to break their chains, than, from a spirit, the reverse of that of the gospel, make an improper use of my own liberty by insulting them. Many, very many, it cannot be doubted, would have the courage to die at a stake, in times of serious persecution, who in such times as ours, have not the mental fortitude to act the part of a Robinson, a Jebb, an Evanson, or especially a Lindsey. No person educated a Dissenter can pretend to such merit as this, because none of us have been in their circumstances ; and I hope there may be great merit in human characters far short of theirs.

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I hope I shall always consider speculation as subservient to practice. The most exact knowledge of truth, and the greatest zeal for it, will avail nothing without the practice of those virtues which the most uninstructed of mankind perfectly understand. Nay, the more knowledge we have of the Christian religion, of the general plan and object of it, the more inexcusable shall we be, if we do not, in the first place, take care to impress our hearts with that love of God, and that unreserved devotedness to his will, which our Saviour calls the first and greatest of all commandments, and also with that disinterested good-will to our fellow-creatures, which he calls the second great commandment, and like unto it.

He was himself equally exemplary with respect to them both ; and it is in vain for us to pretend to be Christians if we do not study to resemble him (whom alone we are to

acknowledge in the character of Lord and Master) in the disposition of our minds, and in the conduct of our lives.

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A principle of religion will ever put a man upon a variety of active and vigorous pursuits. No truly pious and good man can be an idle man. He will fully employ all his power of doing good; he will not keep his talent hid in a napkin; and, far from complaining that time hangs heavy on his hands, he will rather complain that he has not time enough for the execution of half his benevolent purposes.

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In this Christian country, the Christianity of the greater number is only a secondary consideration with them. The great objects with the bulk of mankind are pleasure, profit, or honor. Religion, by which I mean a regard to God and a future life, is so little thought of or attended to by them, that it is no sensible check to their pursuits, and enforces no moderation in their gratifications. Consequently, a man who thinks, who feels, and who acts as really becomes a Christian, who sets God always before him, whose views are primarily directed to a future life, and who habitually considers himself as a pilgrim and stranger here below, is a character of which they have no conception. Such views, and a conduct governed by them, they cannot enter into. To them, therefore, it must appear either folly or hypocrisy, and of course will be treated by them with contempt or hatred. Their being nominally Christians themselves will not make them look with more respect upon those who are truly and practically so.

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The principles and prospects of Christianity are, in themselves, so great and so far overbalance all the things of the present life, that they only require to be sufficiently attended to to make any person do or bear any thing for their sake. What hardships will not men undergo, and what risk, even of life, will they not run, in order to obtain a great estate and much more a crown, in this world? In such a case as this, the mere pain of dying would not be regarded by them, if they were sure that they should not actually die, but that, after this suffering, they should certainly gain their purpose. This we see in history, and in common life, continually. There can be no doubt, therefore, but that if the same persons had the same firm faith in the future glorious rewards of Christianity that they have with respect to the things of this life, it would enable them to do and to suffer as much in order to obtain them.

It is only a deficiency of faith that makes persons shrink from persecution and death in the cause of Christianity. Because, in reality, all the pains of this transitory life are nothing in comparison of that eternal weight of glory which awaits those who have faith and patience unto death, with respect to another.

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As we must not make use of violence or abuse ourselves, so we should take it patiently when it is offered by others. It is generally a proof that our adversaries have nothing better to offer, and therefore is a presumption that we have truth on our side; and surely the sense of this may well enable us to bear up under any insult to which we may be exposed. The apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame in the cause of Christ; and so shall we, if we have their temper, and the same firm persuasion that the cause in which we engage is a good one, and, consequently, that in proper time it will appear to be so; when

the insult and reproach that have been thrown upon us all will recoil upon those who had recourse to them.

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To an attentive reader there needs no other evidence of the authenticity of the books of Moses than the manner in which they are written ; especially his most earnest and affectionate address to the people before his death, contained in the book of Deuteronomy, in which he constantly appeals to the people with respect to what themselves had seen and heard, and makes the most natural observations upon it. I should think it barely possible for any person to read only that book through with attention, and remain an unbeliever in the great events alluded to in it, and related more at length in the preceding books. There is nowhere extant, since the art of writing was known, and since the art has been most improved, a mode of address more expressive of genuine and excellent sentiments, than what we find in this, the oldest of all writers.

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That such men as Jesus and the apostles should either form such a scheme as that of the regeneration of the world (for Christianity pretends to nothing less), when it required ages to effect it, or should finally succeed in it notwithstanding all the obstacles that lay in their way, is something more extraordinary, more out of the course of nature, and therefore more properly miraculous, than any thing recorded in the gospels, and consequently, less credible.

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Nothing can be more sublime in itself, or tend more to elevate the mind that contemplates it, than the idea of one great Being, one all-comprehensive Mind, equal to the whole



work of creation and providence. By the utmost efforts of our minds, we cannot attain to more than a very imperfect idea of such a Being as this; but the very attempt to contemplate it, fills the mind with the deepest reverence and the most joyful confidence, and likewise tends to engage our obedience to his will; also in the habitual endeavour to resemble the great object of our worship, we shall study to purify ourselves, even as he is pure.

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It seems to be the intention of Divine Providence, that every thing should be brought to perfection by degrees. If we have any faith in history and prophecy, the last age of the world is to be infinitely preferable to any thing that we have yet experienced; and certainly the present state of things is preferable to any that is past. By means of Christianity chiefly, the great Governor of the world is gradually bringing on a state of universal peace and happiness, which must, as I have observed, imply the abolition of slavery, as well as of every other evil. But God works by instruments; and his instruments in things that respect mankind, are chiefly men.

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We are all sensible how capable the condition of men is of improvement; and yet even among those who are themselves enlightened and well-intentioned, how few are there who are sufficiently active, so that when they see an evil, they will seriously use their endeavours to remedy it; and when they see any great good to be attained, will excite themselves to attain it! Wealth is a much easier sacrifice than labor, and yet how little of this is well applied! What immense sums are daily squandered away on frivolous and unworthy objects, to speak in the most favorable manner, and how little of it (and much of that little with grudging, or with

some sinister view which takes much from the merit of the action) is applied to honorable and public uses ! so few there are who attend to the advice of the apostle, exhorting every person to mind not his own things only, but every man also the things of others.

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Better, infinitely better, were it to die rich in good works and thus make the world your heirs, than give wealth to individuals, for whose conduct and liberality you cannot answer, and whose independence on personal exertion may do them more harm than good. It is, no doubt, the duty of every man to provide for his own, and especially his children and nearest relations ; but wisdom, and even true affection, will set bounds to that provision, and leave them a sufficient motive for industry and economy. Every man, however attached to his own offspring, or near relations, has a clear right to consider himself as a member of the community at large ; and it is even incumbent upon him to set his successors an example of that generosity and public spirit, in which, if he be a wise and liberal man himself, he must wish that they would follow his steps.

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It is well known that there are states of mind, in which no attention will be given to any thing that is offensive to it. A philosopher of great eminence, having advanced an opinion concerning something that might be determined by a microscopical observation, refused to look through a microscope that was brought to him with the object ready prepared, when he was told that the inspection would refute his hypothesis. And certainly vicious propensities lay a stronger bias on the mind, than any speculative opinions whatever.

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It is evident from every thing that Jesus said on the subject of a future state, that he did not infer the doctrine by any kind of argumentation whatever. He did not reason like Plato, but taught it as one having authority from God so to do. He never advanced any thing concerning the natural reasonableness or probability of the thing; whereas an impostor would have endeavoured to make his new doctrine appear as plausible as he could, and, by every mode of address to recommend it to his hearers. But in Jesus we see no act of this kind. What he received from the Father, he delivered unto men, without being at all solicitous about the manner in which they received it.

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When we meet with such ideas as these, of the character and disposition of the Hebrews, not only in the book of Psalms, but also through the Old Testament, we must see that all the objections to it by modern unbelievers, from the history of the extermination of the Canaanites and a few other circumstances, must be mere cavils. The minds of the pious Hebrews, who could not but be well acquainted with them all, and, being nearer to the transactions, must have seen them in a truer light than we can do, were, notwithstanding, impressed with the most exalted ideas of the justice and mercy of God, and the maxims of his moral government. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire from heaven, and of the Canaanites by the sword of Israel, gave them no other ideas than that of his abhorrence of vice and his love of virtue and goodness. They were in consequence filled with sentiments of the purest love and reverence, and from their admiration and imitation of his conduct were led to every thing that was amiable and excellent in their own. Compared with this, what was the character of the gods that were worshipped by nations of equal antiquity with the Hebrews? many of them were of the most flagitious character,

and believed to be guilty of most flagitious actions. The greatest of them were beings to whom human sacrifices, and the grossest abominations, were most pleasing.

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Some persons have objected to the evidences of Christianity, but certainly without sufficient reason, the differences of opinion among Christians ; since the very same objection may be made to natural religion, and indeed to every thing that has ever been imagined of so much importance as to engage much of the attention of mankind ; the consequence of which has always been different conceptions concerning it. Were not the disciples of Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato divided among themselves ? Are there not as many sects among the Mohammedans as among the Christians ? And are there not almost as many different opinions among the Papists as among the Protestants, notwithstanding they profess to be possessed of an infallible judge in all controversies of faith ? Do not even our ablest lawyers give different opinions concerning the sense of acts of parliament, which were intended to convey the most determinate meaning so as to obviate all cavils ? Nay, have we not equal reason to expect that unbelievers should agree in the same system of unbelief ? If they say to us, agree first among yourselves, and tell us what Christianity is, and we will tell you what we have to object to it ; we have a right to reply,—Do you agree first with respect to what you suppose to be wrong in it, tell us what you object to, and we will then consider of the proper answer.

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*Extract from the Preface to the History of Electricity.*

A philosopher ought to be something greater and better than another man. The contemplation of the works of God should give a sublimity to his virtue, should expand his benevolence, extinguish every thing mean, base, and selfish in his nature, give a dignity to all his sentiments, and teach him to aspire to the moral perfections of the great Author of all things. What great and exalted beings would philosophers be, would they but let the object about which they are conversant, have their proper moral effect upon their minds! A life spent in contemplation of the productions of divine power, wisdom, and goodness, would be a life of devotion. The more we see of the wonderful structure of the world, and the laws of nature, the more clearly do we comprehend their admirable uses, to make all the percipient creation happy; a sentiment which cannot but fill the heart with unbounded love, gratitude, and joy.

Even every thing painful and disagreeable in the world appears to be provided, as a remedy of some other greater inconvenience, or a necessary means of a much greater happiness; so that from this elevated point of view, he sees all temporary evils and inconveniences to vanish, in the glorious prospect of the great good to which they are subservient. Hence, he is able to venerate and rejoice in God, not only in the bright sunshine, but also in the darkest shades of nature, whereas, vulgar minds are apt to be disconcerted with the appearance of evil.

Nor is the cultivation of piety useful to us only as men, it is even useful to us as philosophers; and as the true philosophy tends to promote piety, so a generous and manly piety is reciprocally subservient to the purposes of philosophy; and this both in a direct and indirect manner. While we keep in view the great final cause of all the parts and laws of nature, we have some clue by which to trace the efficient



cause. This is most of all obvious in that part of philosophy which respects the animal creation. As the great and excellent Dr. Hartley observes, "Since this world is a system of benevolence, and consequently its Author the object of unbounded love and adoration, benevolence and piety are our only true guides in our inquiries into it; the only keys that will unlock the mysteries of nature, and clues which lead through her labyrinths. Of this all branches of natural history and natural philosophy afford abundant instances."

In all these inquiries, let the inquirer take it for granted previously, that every thing is right, and the best that can be, *cæteris manentibus*; that is, let him with a pious confidence seek for benevolent purposes, and he will be always directed to the right road; and after a due continuance in it, attain to some new and valuable truth: whereas every other principle and motive of examination, being foreign to the great plan on which the universe is constructed, must lead into endless mazes, errors, and perplexities.

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*Extract from the Preface to Dr. Priestley's latest  
Publication.*

As an old man, and one whose increasing infirmities admonish him that he cannot be far from that bourn from which there is no return, I hope I shall be excused if I take this opportunity of saying that, in these circumstances, the advantage arising from a firm belief in revelation, and consequently in a future state, is inexpressible; and by persons wholly immersed in the business of this life, and fascinated with its vain pursuits and fleeting enjoyments, cannot be conceived, and will not be believed.

The nearer I am to death, the nearer I am continually thinking I am to the great scenes that will open to me after



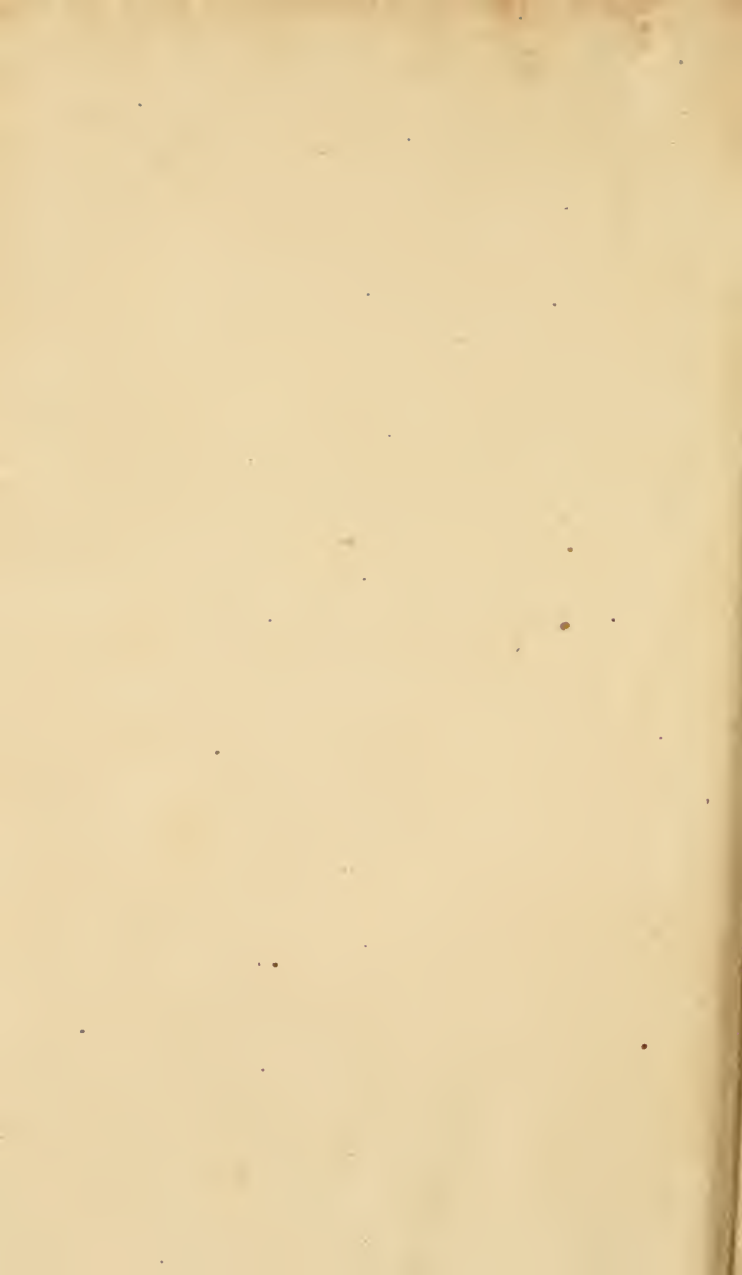
it; and, to my apprehension, immediately after it: when I shall receive from that Jesus, whose divine mission it has been one principal object with me to defend, and by whose precepts, I hope I may say, it has been my habitual endeavour to regulate all my conduct (how imperfect soever has been my success), whatever new station I shall be thought qualified for in the renovated world, and which, I hope, will not be less active, useful, and happy, than that which has been my lot in this.

There, if I have this happiness, I shall meet all my pious friends and benefactors, whose characters and virtues I take pleasure in contemplating; and it has been my happiness to have had among those whom I call my friends, some of the first and fairest of human characters. Their good opinion and encouragement has always been more than a compensation for all the obloquy, and some more serious evils, to which I have occasionally been exposed. These, however, I now look back upon without any resentment with respect to men, and with gratitude to the Sovereign Disposer of all things, for the salutary discipline of which they have been a part. Without such discipline as this, though consisting of many things exceedingly unpleasant and distressing at the time, what would any man be? The best of us would be nothing more than spoiled children, unhappy in ourselves and insufferable to others.

I have no idea of any greater happiness than such society as I have had, and such employments and pursuits as I have been occupied in here. Then, in particular, I shall hope to resume my investigation of the great system of which I am a part, with more advantage than I can at present; and, seeing more of the Creator in his works, feel such an increase of admiration and devotion, as our imperfect knowledge does not admit of at present. There, all the evils, natural and moral, that are incident to the present state, having answered the excellent purpose of discipline, and of forming the mind to true excellence, will be done away.



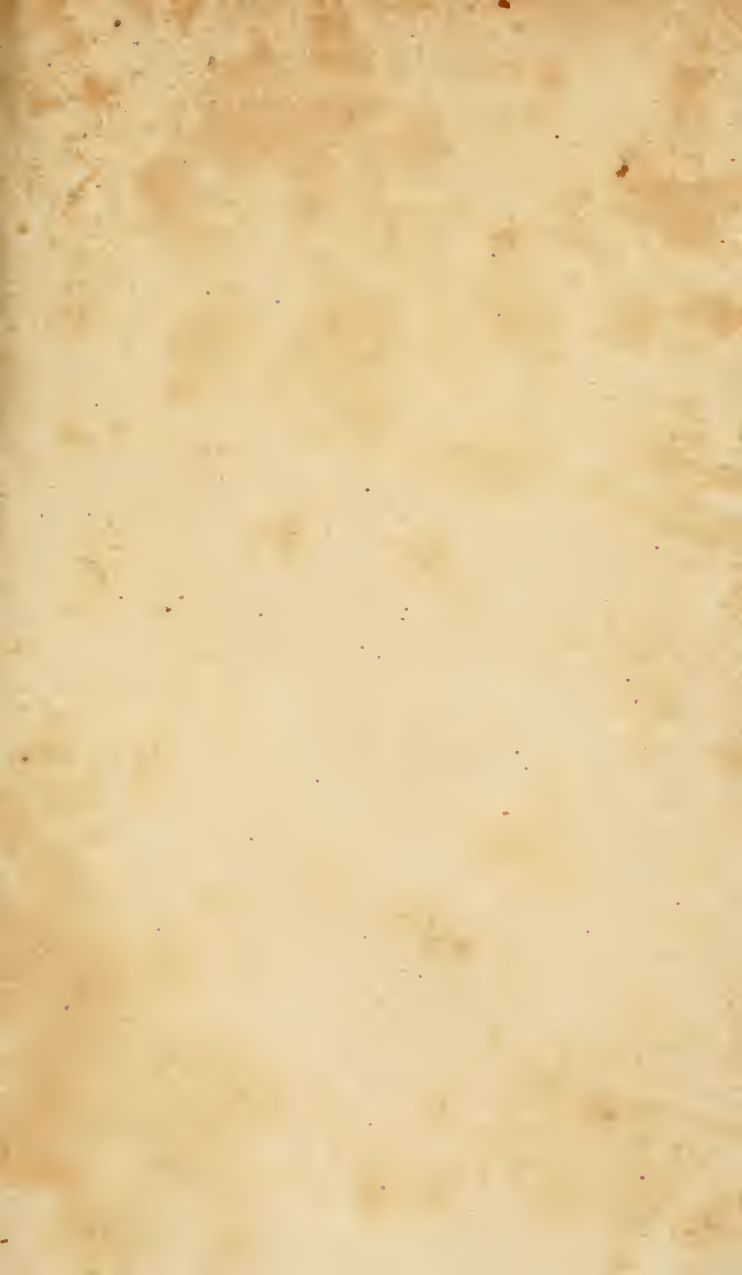


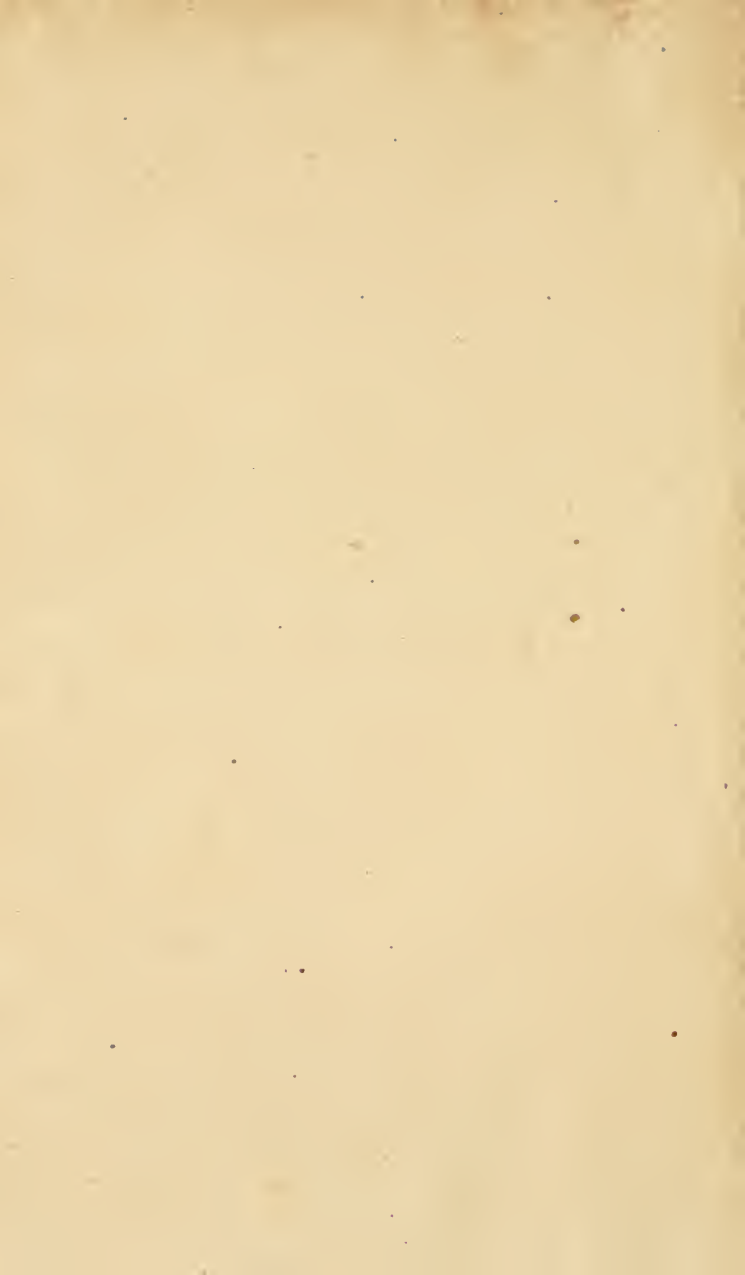














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